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New study on how parents evaluate their kids' apps **p73**

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kidscreen

engaging the global children's entertainment industry

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Cover Our editorial cover features several characters from *Fuzzy Tales*, a brand-new preschool series produced by Toronto, Canada's Brain Power Studio. International and event copies, meanwhile, feature an ad from Nelvana Enterprises for animated series *Detentionaire*.

DANIEL TIGER'S

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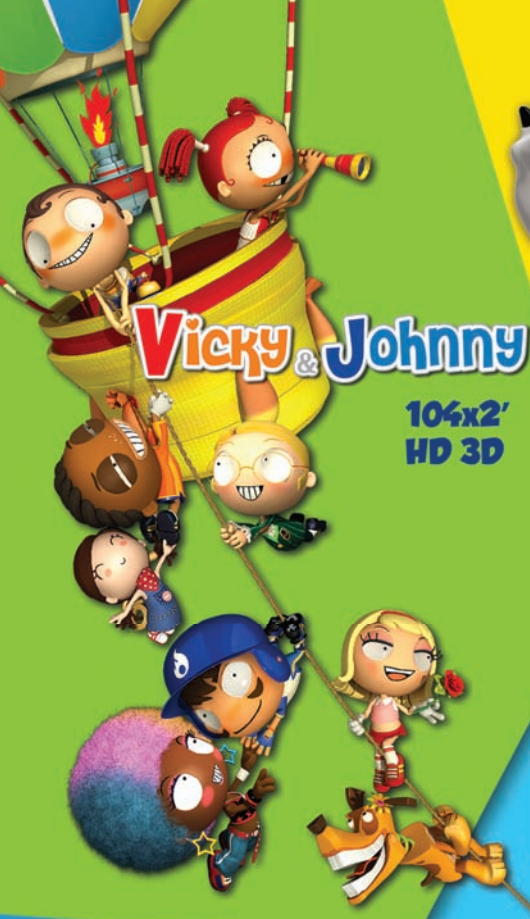


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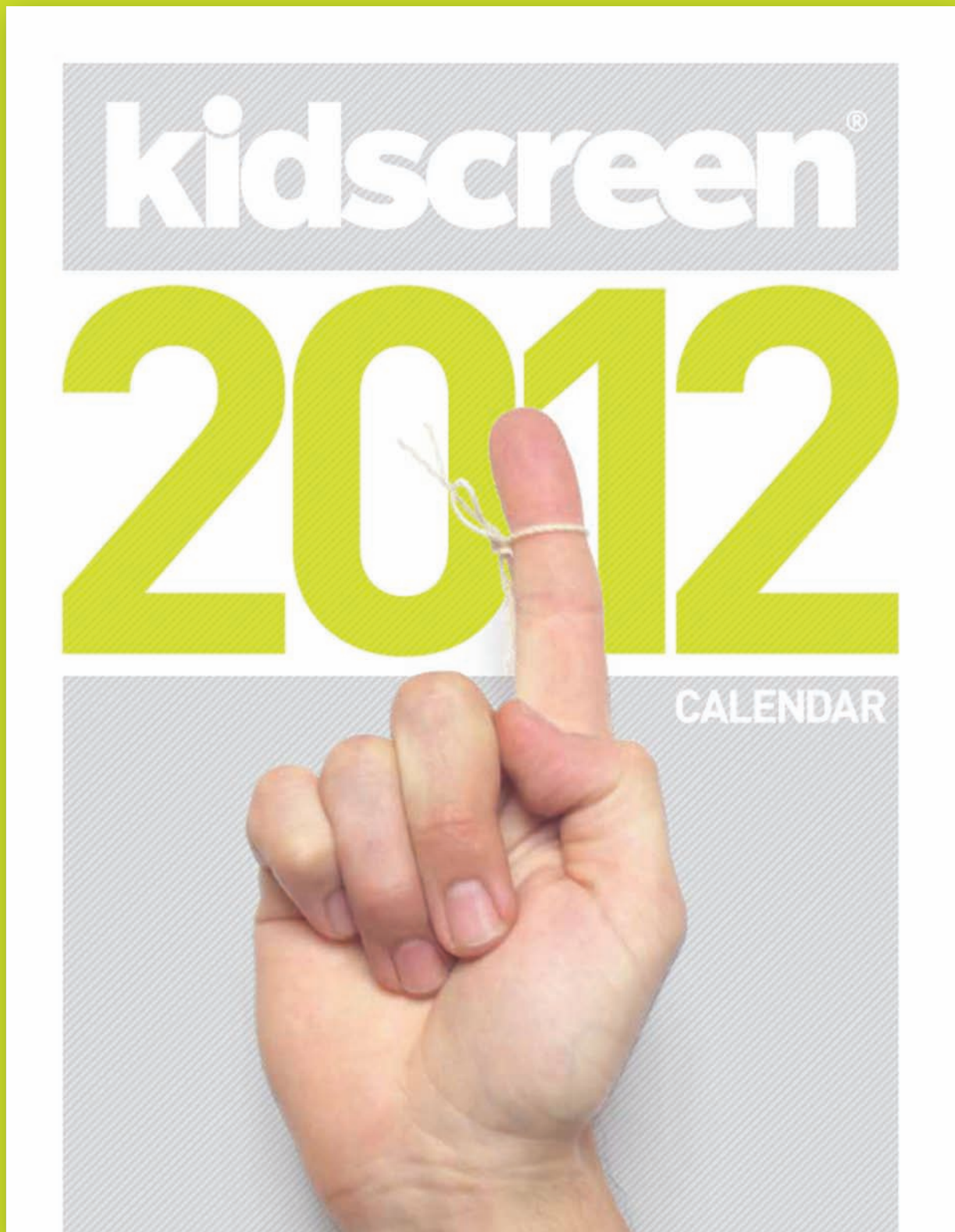


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Much ado about SpongeBob

Just as we were wrapping this issue, the mainstream US media was all aflutter over that famous yellow pineapple-dweller. Over his 10-plus years, *SpongeBob SquarePants* has fielded a lot of flack—evangelical Christians decrying him as gay, anti-commercialization advocates contending he made kids fat and, most recently, Fox News declaring he advocated a pro-liberal agenda on global warming. And now, dun, dun, da... he's damaging the developing brains of preschoolers. Or so the likes of Fox ("Watching *SpongeBob* can lead to learning problems?") and the *National Review* ("[*SpongeBob* might make you stupid"] would have the average person believe.



What's at the root of this new and extremely misguided bout of ire is a study from the University of Virginia published in September's *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Researchers tested 60 four-year-olds with the aim of gauging the impact different types of TV shows had on the kids' executive neurological functions, namely looking at the effect of program pacing on the test groups. The kids were split into two groups. One watched nine minutes of decidedly fast-paced *SpongeBob* (not named in the study, but the pineapple reference was a dead giveaway) and the other either drew pictures or watched nine minutes of an educational preschool series, in this case *Caillou*.

According to the study, "the fast-paced cartoon had immediate negative effects" on the executive functions of the four-year-olds who watched it, and these kids performed "significantly worse" on post-show assigned tasks than the other test subjects. Sigh.

Media outlets immediately seized upon the results and went into attack mode, even though its researchers and Dr. Dimitri Christakis, who penned the formal response to the study in the same issue of *Pediatrics*, had reservations about its results. He said the study had significant weaknesses, foremost were its small sample size and the fact that it raised more questions than it answered. Notably, Christakis also questioned the narrow age range of the subjects. "Does the age of the child matter?" he asks. Well, here's where I'd say definitely, yes.

What's been lost in the hubbub is that *SpongeBob* is not intended for preschool viewing. It never has been. Its pacing, humor and storylines are not meant to foster preschool development—they're designed to make older kids laugh their little butts off. The one positive conclusion that can be drawn, and there is one, particularly from an industry perspective, is that shows made specifically for preschoolers seem to be doing the job for which they're largely intended—helping kids under age five learn and develop. See? All that money spent on building solid curriculums and hiring educational consultants does pay off. Now if only there was enough cash to fully educate parents (and journalists) about the shows kids should be watching at a given age. Did you know that Adult Swim draws 83,000 two- to five-year-old viewers daily in the US (see "Lay of the Land," page 42)? It looks to me like there are much bigger sponges to fry.

Cheers,
Lana

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VP & PUBLISHER
Jocelyn Christie
jchristie@brunico.com

EDITORIAL

Lana Castleman Editor
lcastleman@brunico.com

Kate Calder Senior Writer
kcalder@brunico.com

Gary Rusak Senior Writer
grusak@brunico.com

Wendy Goldman Getzler Senior Online Writer
wgoldman@brunico.com

Writers and Contributors

Amanda Burgess (Toronto)
Insight Kids (New York)

KidSay (Olathe, KS)
Nickelodeon Kids & Family (New York)

The Nielsen Company (New York)
Gary Pope (London)

Dawn Wilensky (New York)

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Myles Hobbs Associate Publisher
mhobbs@brunico.com

Kristina Ejem Account Manager
kejem@brunico.com

Vakis Boutsalis Marketing Coordinator
vboutsalis@brunico.com

CREATIVE

Creative Director **Stephen Stanley**
sstanley@brunico.com

Art Director **Andrew Glowala**
aglowala@brunico.com

Production/Distribution Coordinator **Robert Lines**
rlines@brunico.com

AUDIENCE SERVICES

Director of Audience Services and Production
Jennifer Colvin jcolvin@brunico.com

Manager, Audience Services
Christine McNailey cmcnailey@brunico.com

CORPORATE

President & CEO **Russell Goldstein**
rgoldstein@brunico.com

VP & Editorial Director **Mary Maddever**
mmaddever@brunico.com

VP of Finance & Administration **Linda Lovegrove**
llovegrove@brunico.com

VP & Chief Information Officer **Omri Tintpulver**
otintpulver@brunico.com

VP & Realscreen Publisher **Claire Macdonald**
cmacdonald@brunico.com

Customer care

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please contact us by e-mail: kidscreencustomer@brunico.com
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Produced by: Engine Entertainment
Genre: Comedy
Format: 40 episodes x 30 mins
Language: English
Distribution: Bomanbridge Media
Email: info@bomanbridge.tv
Tel: +65 6224 4211



Tattoo War in HD

5 individuals seeking revenge gain superhuman powers after being tattooed. With these newfound abilities, they attempt to set things right, but find a terrible fate awaiting them.

Produced by: The Creative Room
Genre: Animation Action
Format: 6 episodes x 30 mins
Language: English
Email: pok@thecreativeroom.net
Tel: +65 9619 5095



Franklin and Friends in HD

Franklin - he's older, wiser and coming out of his shell! The brand new CGI series, Franklin and Friends, co-produced by IFW and Nelvana, features new episodes for kids aged 4-7 based on the award-winning books by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark. Franklin has been an international favorite for decades - keeping children laughing and learning with heartwarming stories focused on personal growth and empowerment, building self-esteem and independence. With over 65 million Franklin books sold worldwide and 100 titles in print in over 30 languages, 2011 marks the 25th anniversary of the first Franklin book release.

Produced by: Infinite Frameworks and Nelvana Ltd.
Genre: CGI Animated TV Series
Format: 52 episodes x 11 mins
Language: English
Distribution: Treehouse
Email: fyeo@frameworks.com.sg
Tel: +65 6223 1262



Milly, Molly

Based on the international publishing hits, this charming series follows the adventures of our two heroines and their friends in a small country town. Exciting, poignant and funny, *Milly Molly* celebrates difference and promotes acceptance of diversity. Each episode has a subtle message about values such as honesty, persistence and responsibility, as well as showing life skills like dealing with bullying and forgiveness. Together, Milly and Molly face the world and its complexities, while managing to have fun.

Produced by: Scrawl Studios & Beyond Entertainment
Genre: Educational
Format: 52 episodes x 15 mins
Language: English
Email: jeong@scrawlstudios.com
Tel: +65 6225 0910



Adventures of Bradley in HD

Meet Bradley - a plucky 6 year old boy with a head crammed full of ideas. Join Bradley and his pals on their adventures around the world as they discover new and exotic places.

Produced by: Red Kite Animations
Genre: Pre-school 3D Animation
Format: 52 episodes x 11 mins
Language: English
Email: info@redkite-animation.com
Tel: +44 0 131 554 0060

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The List

Five things on our radar this month



1 **Preschool upheaval**

The summer was definitely not kind to preschool specialists in the biz. Chapman Entertainment (*Fifi and the Flowertots*, *Roary the Racing Car*) restructured in late July, significantly reducing its staff and halting the development of new programming. At press time, brand manager Chorion (*Olivia*, *The Octonauts*, pictured) had entered into administration and will be sold in chunks on the heels of chairman Waheed Alli's departure—he resigned after being unable to renegotiate the company's US\$113-million debt load. HIT Entertainment, home to one of the globe's top preschool properties *Thomas the Tank Engine*, remains on the block almost a year after talk of a sale started swirling. And finally, on a slightly brighter note, Turner Broadcasting EMEA just snapped up preschool brand *LazyTown*, lock, stock and Magnus Scheving. Lazytown's Iceland-based owner Latibaer had well-documented financial difficulties brought on by that country's 2009 financial meltdown, but under Turner's wing, a brand rebirth is on the horizon.



2 **Mooney leaves the Mouse**

Andy Mooney unexpectedly resigned as chairman of Disney Consumer Products last month, sending shockwaves through the global licensing biz. The move has hastened the merger of Disney's home entertainment division with DCP under former movie-distribution president Robert Chapek. The realignment should give the CP giant even more bargaining power at retail buyers' tables the world over, much to its competition's dismay.



3 **A Slingbox throw-down**

Time Warner Cable is subsidizing purchases of the Slingbox set-top box that enables users to call up their cable-TV offerings through any internet-enabled device. It's an indication of the growing strength of the internet as a true content-delivery system. It's also another shot lobbed in the battle between TW and its TV network suppliers, which have charged TW with "unlicensed distribution" via an iPad app that offers cable content online.




4 **Amazon vs. Apple**

The countdown is on to next month's debut of Amazon's much-hyped seven-inch Kindle tablet. With the iPad currently leading the tablet market, the rumored Android-powered, full-color device has a big game of catch-up to play—but with a price tag of just US\$250 and deep integration with other Amazon services, ePublishing is bound to get a lot more interesting.



5 **Google schools teachers**

Google invited 50 teachers from all over the world to its first-ever YouTube Teacher's Studio. The workshop is designed to show educators how to reach kids using the tech that already resonates with them. Teachers learned how to create video playlists to support lessons, as well as "flip teaching," where students watch a video of a lesson at home and then do their "homework" in class.

 To keep up with the news as it happens, check out Kidscreen.com daily.

What's Next?

Creating a career vision to guide you to the next level

Designing a career blueprint might not be as hard as you think. Leadership expert **Kate Ebner** outlines some easy steps to getting on the right path.



"What's next for me?" is the question that we often hear from our coaching clients. Many people are working very hard, focusing on doing their best in their current job, and warding off that uneasy feeling that there is a future calling to them that they might somehow miss out on. They often ask: "How do I know if I'm on the right path?" and "What should I be doing to get where I really want to go?"

If these questions are on your mind, it's time to create a vision to guide your life and career. Just as a company's vision statement and strategic plan serve to guide employees in the right direction, your own personal vision will serve as your North Star, guiding your journey. Your career vision will also help you align your passion with your goals and path.

Creating a vision for your career is easy. First, set a time horizon, such as three, five or 10 years, and spend 15 minutes imagining exactly what you'd like your life and career to be at that point in time. Do think "big," rather than letting your inner voice talk you out

of something that may seem like a stretch. Once you've imagined it in detail, write your vision down immediately. This exercise is your first step towards the career you're destined to have. Your vision statement will guide you to make choices that get you moving in the right direction almost right away. Now that you have your vision, ask yourself, "What two steps can I take this week to begin moving in this direction?" You've found the starting point on the path to making your vision real!

Now that you know your ideal destination, you can look at your current job and understand what it offers that's helping you prepare for that future. Often the position you're in is great training for your ultimate career. Your vision will help you shift immediately from passive to purposeful, inspiring you into action to get the life and career you really want.

Editor's Note: Be sure to keep an eye out for Kate Ebner's new blog, *The Inspired Leader*, which debuts this month on Kidscreen.com. And if you're planning to attend Kidscreen Summit, look into signing up for Kate's Leadership Training Day master class (Monday, February 6). More info about the day-long program is available at: summit.kidscreen.com/2012/agenda_master_classes.html.

Seeing the vision

Make the leap to visionary thinking. Here are some tips on how to relax and imagine success on your terms.

1. **Be detailed and specific.** Really picture what it is you want.
2. **Give yourself full permission to be visionary.** Don't tell yourself "No."
3. **Replace your negative self-judgments with compassion and encouragement.**
4. **Be bold.**
5. **Envision from the heart—tap into your passion, rather than logic.** Visioning is a creative process, not a linear one.
6. **Be open to surprises.**
7. **Share your visioning with someone you trust and who will encourage you as you go forward.**

Top leadership coach Kate Ebner is the founder and CEO of The Nebo Company (www.nebocompany.com), a leadership consultancy based in Washington, DC. Kate teaches executives at Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits and government agencies how to use vision as a powerful and practical tool for manifesting the important changes they want to see. You can reach Kate via kebner@nebocompany.com or at 202-966-3201.

Out of Office

Tales from the frequent fliers club



Jennifer Lawlor

SVP of consumer products, Zodiac Rights

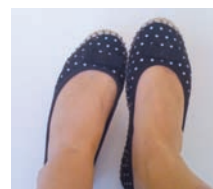


photo: Kaitia

1. In my carry-on

you'll find a big scarf, water, gossip mags, various books, documents that I really should be reading, and flat shoes for the long walk in T5.

2. My go-to gadget

is my new iPhone (sorry, poor old BlackBerry).

3. On the fly

I've learned that better technology and increased airport security mean less flexibility (i.e. it's possible to miss my flight!!).

4. Preferred in-air tunes

Something mellow like Adele or Newton Faulkner

5. Best in-flight food

is either Itsu sushi (I bring it myself) or the BA curry option.



photo: Jonathan

6. Best power-lunch

Zodiac's yacht, of course!

7. Window or aisle?

Aisle—I like to see what's going on.

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You could have knocked us over with a feather (see “The List,” p. 25) when Disney Consumer Products announced chairman **Andy Mooney**’s resignation from the company in early September. Mooney was largely credited with snapping DCP into shape during his 11-year tenure, re-invigorating its licensing model from passive to very active and gifting the org with two standout girls franchises, Disney Princess and Disney Fairies. At press time, he had not announced his next move and speculations around the reasons for his departure were running rampant. However, with annual global retail sales that now top US\$28 billion, Mooney’s quickly appointed successor at DCP, **Robert**

In the UK, there’s also been quite a bit of action on the consumer products front. Zodiak Rights has expanded and reorganized its licensing team under SVP **Jennifer Lawlor**. Getting a bump is **Jane Kennedy**, who has been promoted to head of sales for UK consumer products from the position of senior UK licensing manager. She’ll be overseeing the UK-based CP sales team. Also moving up is Zodiak Rights UK licensing manager **Emily French Ullah**. She’s shifted into a licensing manager of softlines for EMEA role. **Gaby Dior**, meanwhile, has been appointed international licensing manager for agents and will look after relationships with Zodiak’s roster of

specialist’s portfolio in the UK, including Fifi and the Flower-tots and Roary the Racing Car. At Coolabi, Dyson will be looking after Poppy Cat, Purple Ronnie, Scarlett & Crimson, and classics Bagpuss and Clangers, among others.

Kate Schlomann [C], meanwhile, joins FremantleMedia Enterprises, the consumer products arm of global production company FremantleMedia, as EVP of brand management and marketing. The newly created position is a byproduct of the company’s expansion into new areas of IP development, including its Children’s & Family Entertainment division established in 2009.

On the production scene, Toronto, Canada-based

affairs and was responsible for primetime television development. Murphy, prior to her stint as SVP of development at Cookie Jar, served as president of Kiefer Sutherland’s Eastside Entertainment and oversaw comedy and drama development.

Also stirring in the City of Angels, The Jim Henson Company has appointed its first dedicated senior executive to oversee distribution. As EVP of global distribution, former Warner Bros. exec **Richard Goldsmith [D]** will spearhead global sales across all platforms, including TV home entertainment and digital. Prior to Goldsmith’s appointment, Henson’s distribution division was headed up by president and COO

oversee the creative development and production of content for Saban properties, including Power Rangers and Paul Frank. He will also look after the development of multi-platform content strategies for all IP acquired by Saban Brands. Over the past 15 years, Hardman has developed and supervised the making of hundreds of hours of children’s television programming broadcast on networks like Kids’ WB! and Nickelodeon. His credits include *Rugrats*, *The Wild Thornberrys* and *Jackie Chan Adventures*.

In the UK, **Joss Duffield** has been named head of international sales for London-based eOne Family, where she will be responsible

people



Chapek [A], has some big shoes to fill. Chapek moves from his role as president of distribution for Walt Disney Studios to president of DCP. With the appointment, Disney is now consolidating retail and licensing across its lines of business, including Walt Disney Studios, Pixar, Disney Media Networks, Consumer Products and Home Entertainment. (Interestingly, Marvel consumer products’ business also now falls under Chapek; it had been largely independent since Disney’s acquisition of Marvel Entertainment in 2009.) And DVD sales now sit alongside toys, video games and apparel. What it means, in the short-term, is that the world’s largest entertainment licensor should have even more clout when negotiating with mass-market retail partners, as all of its key product categories are sitting under one roof now.

international licensing agents.

Over at Walker Books, we find former Coolabi head of licensing **Anna Hewitt** taking on the head of licensing position at the UK-based publisher, with a remit to drive growth in its in-house consumer products division. She is looking after Walker brands based on its published properties, including Lucy Cousin’s ever-green *Maisy*, the classic *Guess How Much I Love You* and new brand *Tilly and Friends*. Prior to joining Coolabi in 2010, Hewitt spend 10 years at BBC Worldwide.

Not to be outdone, Hewitt’s former employer Coolabi announced the appointment of **Natasha Dyson [B]** as its new head of licensing the day after Walker went public with its news. Dyson hails from Chapman Entertainment, where she served as head of licensing, managing the preschool

prodco Shaftesbury is making waves with its expansion into the US. It set up a brand-new L.A. office last month and tapped former Cookie Jar Entertainment execs **Tom Mazza** and **Maggie Murphy** to jointly oversee the division as co-heads. The company, which has been behind kids live-action hits like *Connor Undercover* and *Life with Derek*, says the establishment of a local presence in L.A. falls in line with its natural growth. Both executives running the office have extensive roots in the US creative community and strong relationships with American broadcasters. Prior to his time as EVP and head of worldwide television at Cookie Jar, Mazza co-founded the branded entertainment company Madison Road Entertainment. He is also a 12-year veteran of Paramount Networks Television, where he served as EVP of creative

Peter Schube, who brought **Patti Rose** on-board last year to focus on program distribution in the international markets. Goldsmith was hired in reaction to what is already happening at the company on the creative side—it’s got a whack of content on the verge of being greenlit. For now, his efforts are focused on *Pajanimals*, the company’s new half-hour series co-produced with 24-hour preschool channel Sprout and Northern Ireland’s Sixteen South. Also on his plate will be fulfilling the digital needs of the company and third-party platforms such as Netflix and iTunes.

And it seems like Saban Brands is making deeper moves into production, bringing on TV industry vet **John Hardman** as its new director of development and programming. Hardman will

for global distribution of the company’s portfolio of children’s series. Duffield was previously a director at Turner International.

And it looks like Hasbro Studios SVP of international distribution **Finn Arnesen** has made his first big hire, tapping content sales veteran **Nina Scales** as senior sales director for the company’s international distribution division. Based in London, she’s set to play a key role in the global distribution of Hasbro Studios series including *Blythe Loves the Littlest Pet Shop*, *Transformers* and *My Little Pony*, with a focus on EMEA. Scales has more than 10 years of experience in content sales and joins Hasbro from the international distribution arm of Tinopolis-owned producer Sunset+Vine.

For more People Moves, head over to kidscreen.com/category/people-moves

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Rising animator's first short *Verne on Vacation* gets picked up by Turner EMEA



Who Sylvain Marc, Cartoon Network Development Studio Europe's rising animation star whose 11-minute pilot, *Verne on Vacation*, has been commissioned as a 52-minute TV special—a first for the Turner-owned entity.

First steps French-born Marc is writing and directing the upcoming *Verne on Vacation* special and may bring heavy-weight terrestrial broadcaster France Télévisions in as a co-producer. Marc is currently putting pen to paper for the project, which is based on his original short that depicts the adventures of a young boy who lands on a moving mechanical island. With the hopes of getting a full series commission, Marc remains confident in the first 52-minute outing. "I'm happy with at least a special. I'm a person made for long-form animation, where I can spend time polishing designs," he says. "This is almost like a test. We'll see if they ask for more."

The right elements Marc is using his background in illustration and graphic animation (he spent five years training, splitting the time between France's École Estienne and the Gobelins animation school) to design the 2D project, which will also employ CGI animation elements. "You can achieve great things with the right people in 2D. Plus, you can make it fresh while using a smaller budget. Low-budget CGI just doesn't look nice," he contends. With the rest of his 2011 wrapped up in all things *Verne*, Marc may just need a vacation of his own once his first major project takes off. —Wendy Goldman Getzler

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▶ A full listing of Industry Events is available at kidscreen.com/events

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Sinek's unconventional and innovative views on business and leadership have attracted international attention and have earned him invitations to meet with leaders and organizations including Microsoft, Dell, Intel, Chanel, the US Military, the United Nations, NASA, members of the US Congress and many other government agencies and entrepreneurs. Sinek has been featured in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *FastCompany*, *CMO Magazine* and *BusinessWeek*, and he speaks at events around the world. The "How Great Leaders Inspire" talk he gave at his first TEDx event is one of the most shared TED Talks online. [Check it out at www.TED.com](http://www.TED.com).

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Canadian producers hope new deal with broadcasters gives them more to offer international partners

BY KATE CALDER

A balancing act?

On

September 1, Canada made the switch from analog to digital signals, amping up the available broadcast spectrum for sale to private-sector media and mobile companies. The increase in signal space comes a year after several key Canadian broadcast players consolidated—Shaw Communications acquired CanWest, and Bell Media fully integrated CTV into its holdings—creating multi-platform broadcast empires that further diminished the number of competitors in the Ca-

nadian broadcast landscape. And after months of wrangling, July 1 saw the brand-new Terms of Trade agreement put into effect by Canada's regulatory broadcast body, the Canadian Radio and Television Council (CRTC), to redress the disparity in power between the ever-growing media conglomerates and the independent producers that supply a good chunk of the content.

Playing against a stacked team

The Canadian market is now made up of fewer broadcasters that extend their reach across conventional TV, as well as pay and specialty television, internet and mobile platforms, which the Canadian Media Production Association (CMPA) saw as a major imbalance.

"When broadcasters all merge together, you have fewer doors to knock on, you don't have a level playing field," says Ira Levy, partner and executive producer at Toronto's Breakthrough Entertainment, and is also a board member and co-chair of the regulatory committee at the CMPA. Levy has lobbied for a codified trade process on behalf of producers for several years. He explains that not only did license fees and rates drop in a market with fewer broadcast competitors, but the networks also began holding onto more and more broadcast and multi-platform rights.

"If the broadcaster, as part of the deal, insists on taking all TV rights for an extended period of time, as well as all the interactive rights, it lessens the value that a producer can get, even in their own country," says Levy.

"The health and viability of independent producers was being fundamentally threatened by the increasing imbalance," echoes Norm Bolen, president and CEO of the CMPA.

Bolen himself worked on the broadcast side as EVP of content for Alliance Atlantis, where he oversaw the programming of 13 Canadian specialty networks, including History Television, which launched in 1997. At the time, the upstart channel commissioned about 15 series from more than 1,000 submissions, for which Bolen says History negotiated a fair market license fee, a three- to four-year window, and limited or unlimited amount of plays.

Fast-forward to 2011 and Bolen says a channel like History (now part of Shaw) would acquire a license for seven to eight years with permission to air the program across as many Shaw channels as it wants. He says a commission deal struck before the new Terms of Trade went into effect in July would have also included digital rights and licensing rights that allow the network to license the program to another outlet outside of its corporate group.

"Terms of Trade is meant to claw back rights and is also an attempt to get broadcasters to significantly improve their business practices," says Bolen.

Inspiration from abroad

Bolen and Levy say the CMPA looked to the UK, Australia and New Zealand as examples of territories that had faced similar issues and implemented their own terms of trade agreements.

In 2003, UK producers' trade association Pact helped to institute a terms of trade agreement, monitored by media industry regulator Ofcom, which gave indies copyright to their programs, rather than the broadcasters. It also introduced codes that required broadcasters to set up rate cards for buying primary rights to programs and outlawed a broadcaster from getting merchandising and



My Big Big Friend's Canuck producer, Breakthrough Entertainment, believes the new Terms of Trade act will make it more competitive in the global market

foreign sales rights when it purchased first-window domestic broadcast rights.

In Canada, the CRTC made signing a terms of trade agreement a condition of broadcast license renewal last year. Canadian broadcast heavyweights Bell Media, Rogers Media, Shaw Media, Astral Media (Family Channel, Disney XD Canada and Disney Junior Canada) and Corus Entertainment (YTV, Treehouse and Nickelodeon Canada) entered into negotiations with the CMPA.

"Those five broadcasters, which are fierce competitors among themselves, were able to get together and agree to a set of terms with us, which shows that there was goodwill and a willingness to come to an agreement," notes Bolen.

The terms

The new agreement, which Bolen says is legally binding between CMPA members and broadcasters, calls for shortened license terms and a limit on the number of rights a broadcaster can obtain when it pays a basic license fee.

"The agreement has to be followed by the broadcasters under penalty of violating

➡ CONTINUED ON PAGE 50

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Taking the pulse of the US kidsnet landscape

With 2011 Nielsen data that shows top US cable and broadcast networks for kids two to five and six to 11 in-hand, we noticed that Nickelodeon, the first-ever dedicated kids cable channel in the country, still leads the pack with Disney and Cartoon Network ranking second and third, respectively.

According to MagnaGlobal VP and director of audience analysis Lisa Quan, Nickelodeon reaches 87% of all US TV households. (The New York-based media agent helped decipher the numbers.) Following right behind are Disney Channel and Cartoon Network/Adult Swim with 86% coverage and ABC Family with 85%. Going down the list are Disney XD (68%), Nick Jr. (64%), TeenNick (61%), The Hub (53%), Nicktoons (50%) and PBS Kids Sprout (43%).

Quan notes speciality kids cable channels go after their own niche target demos that champion a range of top-performing series. For example, she says *Pretty Little Liars* does well on ABC Family's tween and teen skewing sked in contrast to boy-oriented Cartoon Network, where *Ben 10* rules. Disney XD, which leans towards boys and their dad's, will soon be showcasing boy- and Gen X-friendly content from Marvel that Quan predicts will fare well. And she says Nickelodeon has held onto its gender-neutral boy-girl split with the seemingly everlasting appeal of *SpongeBob SquarePants*, as well as star-making hits like *iCarly* and *Victorious*.

"We still believe the other screens that kids are watching are used in addition to television," says Quan. For one thing, TV is always available to kids, whereas other devices like iPads are largely borrowed from parents. (Quan's own research shows that based on estimates for January 2010, 17% of US households have one TV set, 28% have two and 55% have three or more sets.) Quan says the switchover to digital from analog drove families to buy digital-ready sets, handing down older models to their kids or turning them into dedicated stations for playing video games, which could account for the majority of homes having three or more TVs.

However, Quan says families still tend to watch programming together on one central TV set. This may explain the seemingly anomalous high rating Adult Swim has among channels watched by two- to five-year-olds. Quan points to the presence of adult-skewing animated series *Family Guy* on the CN brand as a possible explanation. Not only are kids familiar with the series from its syndication on Fox, but they are watching it with their parents or older siblings when it appears on Adult Swim.

"A friendly dog and little baby don't seem harmful, and it's also appealing for kids to see characters like that in charge," says Quan.

As for terrestrial networks, Quan says they still dominate coverage as they're available in 90% of American homes. However, she says their kid-viewer numbers have dropped off significantly since their Saturday-morning heydays. "Kids were always looking for something to watch and it was limited to mostly Saturday mornings or after school. Once they found cable outlets with basically all-you-can-eat programming, it had a big appeal, as well as the fact that parents became comfortable with using the kids channels as babysitters at any time," says Quan. —Kate Calder

Who's on top

Top US cable channels – 2 to 5s

Channel	Estimated average daily viewers
Nickelodeon	590,000
Disney Channel	328,000
Nick Jr.	317,000
Cartoon Network	197,000
Nick at Nite	86,000
Adult Swim	83,000
Sprout	48,000
Disney XD	43,000
ABC Family	34,000
NickToons	28,000

Top US cable channels – 6 to 11s

Channel	Estimated average daily viewers
Nickelodeon	721,000
Disney Channel	657,000
Cartoon Network	360,000
Nick at Nite	291,000
Adult Swim	147,000
Disney XD	132,000
Nick Jr.	73,000
ABC Family	71,000
NickToons	68,000
TeenNick	45,000

Top US terrestrial channels – 2 to 5s

Channel	Estimated average daily viewers
PBS	262,000
FOX	192,000
ABC	70,000
UNI	67,000
CBS	59,000
NBC	53,000
CW	46,000
TEL	31,000
TF	21,000
ION	16,000

Top US terrestrial channels – 6 to 11s

Channel	Estimated average daily viewers
PBS	313,000
FOX	125,000
ABC	105,000
UNI	85,000
CBS	79,000
NBC	73,000
CW	73,000
TEL	27,000
TF	25,000
ION	20,000

Source: All charts from The Nielsen Company, measuring live broadcast + same-day viewers for the period of December 27, 2010 to July 7, 2011.

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Tuning In



Pajanimals, Sprout's first co-production, airs on The Good Night Show block

Taking root

PBS Kids Sprout grows its reach with parents and kids

The challenge Six years since its 2005 launch, 24-hour preschool channel PBS Kids Sprout's first official Nielsen measurement revealed that the channel averaged 134,000 total viewers per day in August. And between June and August, Sprout gained 24% more households over the number for January to May, growing its kids two to five viewers by 24%, kids five to 11 by 25%, and women 18 to 49 by 14%. Sprout is now refining its positioning as a brand that not only provides programming for kids two to six, but also acts as a destination for parents to spend time with their kids and as a resource to help them get their families through the day.

The plan This November, Sprout is re-launching its signature website and bedtime block, *The Good Night Show*. Andrew Beecham, SVP of programming, explains that Sprout's programming—especially its hosted morning block, *The Sunny Side Up Show*—is set up to drive parents online to contribute and upload content that then gets the spotlight on-air. Beecham says it's currently unclear who the website is for, parents or kids. The redesign, however, is addressing that issue through a new homepage that asks users to choose whether they want to continue as a parent or a Sproutlet.

For Sproutlets, the net worked with L.A.-based digital firm Brandissimo to create a highly visual kids online space that's virtually text-free. "It's all about letting kids explore and find their own experience," says Beecham.

The new parents' site, meanwhile, should make it even easier to interact with the brand on-air. A green Sprout icon will appear in the top right-hand corner of the TV screen when there's an opportunity to contribute to anything that is happening on-air, like a birthday activity. Parents will then be able to hit the Sprout site, click the icon and go directly to the corresponding page.

The programming Along with the website facelift, Sprout is refreshing its popular *Good Night Show*, which airs calming programming such as *Driver Dan's Story Train* and *Thomas & Friends*, interspersed with hosted segments that feature the bilingual Nina and her puppet Star going through the process of getting ready for bed.

"We really want to push *The Good Night Show* because it's a critical time that parents have with their kids, and we want to be there to support them," says Beecham.

Last year, after Sprout noticed chatter on its Facebook page about Nina's pajamas, the channel ran a contest in which viewers could choose new nightwear for her. Although the channel team only expected a few hundred responses, the query yielded more than 750,000 submissions. Now, not only does Nina have five new pairs of pajamas, the show also has a brand-new set of rooms, such as a kitchen for crafting and a hammock that acts as Star's bed. Beecham says the new set better reflects the bedtime process for a family.

As part of Beecham's *Good Night Show* revamp, the block is getting set to air Sprout's first-ever co-production, 26 x half-hour puppet series *Pajanimals*, for which it partnered with The Jim Henson Company and Ireland's Sixteen South. The net is also starting on the second season of its first in-house production, 26 x 11-minute *Noodle and Doodle*, which airs on *The Sunny Side Up Show*.

Next moves Going forward, Beecham says he is open to getting involved in more co-productions. In the meantime, he's looking to find unique programming that fits Sprout's core blocks, including *Wiggly Waffle* (6 a.m. to 9 a.m.), which focuses on getting kids out of bed. *The Sunny Side Up Show* concentrates on programming that highlights interactivity and communication. And *The Good Night Show* (6 p.m. to 9 p.m.) airs series that help wind kids down. —Kate Calder



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The 99 is set to debut in more than 50 countries this year, including Cartoon Network's Southeast Asia feeds



Global role models

The 99 brings cultural diversity to the superhero genre

A new superhero series is taking flight across territories worldwide. It's based on a series of comic books built around the tale of a group of Muslim teens from different countries who come into the possession of 99 mystical Noor Stones, which endow them with powers to fight injustice and bring peace, harmony, enlightenment and diversity to the world. *The 99* comic books and animated series are the brainchild of Naif Al-Mutawa, a clinical psychologist and father of five, who in 2003 was inspired to create a story for kids six to 12 and their families that incorporated a positive portrayal of Muslim culture in a post-9/11 world.

This fall the first season of the 26 x 22-minute series will launch in more than 50 countries across the Middle East, Asia, South Asia, Australia and Ireland, and later on Cartoon Network's Indian and Southeast Asia feeds.

"I wanted to create positive role models for my kids that are rooted in my culture, yet secular to be taken in by the whole world, like Batman and Superman," says Al-Mutawa. "My pitch to investors was that the only people using our culture right now are the bad guys, and the way they are using it gets affected in the media and goes back to our kids, who then identify our culture with one of annihilation."

Al-Mutawa set to work creating a rich back story in which each character personifies one of the 99 qualities that Muslims believe God embodies. And by combining the individual virtues, the characters build collective power. He points out that while the characters are based on Islamic archetypes, there are no overt references to religion in the storytelling itself.

Between 800,000 and one million copies of the 40 comic book titles—produced by Al-Mutawa's Kuwait-based publishing company, Teshkeel, and penned by a team of veterans who

from **michael poryes**,
the co-creator and
executive producer of
"Hannah Montana"

Life WITH Boys



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have written for Marvel and DC Comics—have been distributed across France, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India, China and Indonesia since 2006. And after stumbling across an issue of *The 99* while on vacation in Egypt, a producer at London-based prodco Endemol contacted Al-Mutawa about making a CGI-animated series. (Endemol took care of pre- and post-production in London, with writing done in L.A. and animation in India at Sanraa Media.)

One of the series' first sales last year was to The Hub in the US. CEO Margaret Loesch, who had been a fan of the concept and a mentor to Al-Mutawa during her tenure at The Hatchery, picked the show up for the fledgling kidnet. The series, however, has yet to air on the channel. Al-Mutawa admits that with *The 99* and its potential for generating controversy in the US, he and The Hub have found themselves in uncharted territory. "I'm a big fan of Margaret's, and I'm just waiting along with everyone else for an airdate."

In the meantime, the brand has started to gain some American exposure. Last October Al-Mutawa teamed up with DC Comics to create and distribute a special six-issue series combining *The 99* with *The Justice League of America* that includes Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. This fall, the six issues are rolling out as one graphic novel. Plus, Al-Mutawa and the story of *The 99* will be featured in an upcoming episode of PBS series *Independent Lens* entitled "Wham! Bam! Islam." And an animated film that serves as the foundation of the TV series, *The 99: Unbound*, has been selected to screen during the New York Film Festival in October.

While Al-Mutawa starts production on a second season of *The 99*, he's working on preliminary licensing and merchandising plans. Teshkeel has also teamed up with digital firm Comixology to create a branded app that is scheduled to launch early this month on iTunes, Android and web platforms. —Kate Calder

Oznoz grows multi-lingual reach

Promoting cultural diversity is also top of mind for Vancouver, Canada-based Big Bad Boo Productions. The company is owned by husband and wife team Aly Jetha and Shabnam Rezaei and also has offices in New York and L.A.

Along with the studio's new ethnicity-filled animated series *Mixed Nutz*, which features an ensemble cast of kid characters from Iran, Cuba, Korea, India and Austria, and 52 x 11-minute toon *1001 Nights*, airing in more than 50 countries including Taiwan, Malaysia and Canada, Jetha and Rezaei have gone one step further and set up Oznoz.com. The online sales and distribution platform offers North American kids content in eight languages including Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian and Spanish. The content is available via streaming and VOD and the site also sells DVDs, books and games that teach languages and appeal especially to immigrant or second-generation families that want to foster use of their native language at home.

"The purpose of Oznoz is to provide families in North America with the tools to teach their kids languages, but it also gives producers of animated content a new market to realize revenue, which is not being tapped by anybody," says Jetha.

Since the platform's launch last November, Jetha and Rezaei have been beefing up the content offering with original series as well as non-English dubs of popular kids properties. And this summer, Oznoz signed an extensive deal with Sesame Workshop to make *Sesame Street* available in eight languages on the site in November. Rezaei says Sesame will be publicizing Oznoz on its own site to drive traffic. Oznoz is also working on acquiring a raft of Hebrew-language content from Hop! Channel in Israel and recently picked up rights to *Chota Bheem*, an animated series co-produced by India's Green Gold Animation and Turner International, which Jetha says is currently the top-rated show on Cartoon Network in India. —Kate Calder



Sesame Street will be available on Oznoz.com in eight languages

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40 ⇨ their condition of broadcast license,” says Bolen, adding that it’s the responsibility of broadcasters to write the terms into contracts, but it’s also up to producers to make sure the broadcasters live up to their commitments.

On signing a development agreement, Canadian broadcasters now must pay no less than 50% of the development fee, with no more than 10% of the full fee being tied to the delivery of final materials. The agreement also outlines timelines for producer and broadcaster approvals. Additionally, the Terms of Trade calls for broadcasters to buy a separate license to access ancillary digital media rights with the fee negotiated at the time the program is first licensed—this clause is meant to encourage producers to more fully consider digital extensions at the time the project is greenlit for development. Broadcasters are also required to post contact information for proposal submission on their websites and regularly advise producers on the kinds of projects they are interested in developing.

“You can’t mandate the length of time it takes to create something,” says Levy. “But from a practical point of view, it codifies and makes it simpler to go through the process so you can focus on the creative.”

Levy and Bolen both see the agreement as being pivotal, not only to the sustainability of Canadian producers, but also to their success as international players.

Though no Canadian kidcasters had responded to requests for comment by press time, an official statement from Astral states: “We believe this agreement will further strengthen the Canadian production sector and will ensure that opportunities are fully realized to everyone’s benefit.”

Global appeal

“The terms allow Canadian producers to retain more rights, and those rights become more valuable when you’re forming partnerships with indie producers or other broadcasters around the world,” says Levy. He adds that the agreement can be viewed as a maturation of the Canadian industry and hopes the country’s business will follow in the UK’s footsteps.

“The health and viability of independent producers was being threatened...”

—Norm Bolen
CMPA

According to a report published by Pact this summer, the UK is now second only to the US in global exports of completed programs, with a 10% worldwide market share. Pact states that since the introduction of terms of trade for independent production companies, UK global TV exports have soared by 34%.

“The independent sector in the UK is now worth £2.3 billion [US\$3.64 billion]. Ten years ago, pre-introduction of the legislation, the indie sector’s total value was about £800,000 million [US\$1.26 billion],” says John McVay, CEO of Pact. Though domestic commissions for British producers have been flat for a couple of years, he adds that the demand for UK-produced content overseas kept the domestic indie sector busy. And keeping international rights in the hands of UK producers has allowed them to exploit their IP in foreign markets. “They are becoming more entrepreneurial and more adept at winning commissions in new markets,” says McVay.

And keeping international rights in the hands of UK producers has allowed them to exploit their IP in foreign markets. “They are becoming more entrepreneurial and more adept at winning commissions in new markets,” says McVay.

Cautiously optimistic

“It’s early days,” says Mary Bredin, VP of development and acquisitions at Toronto’s guru Studio, who remains skeptical that the terms will effectively put more power in the hands of independent producers. As long as broadcasters have control of the funds, Bredin says, the business of the small producer will always be challenging.

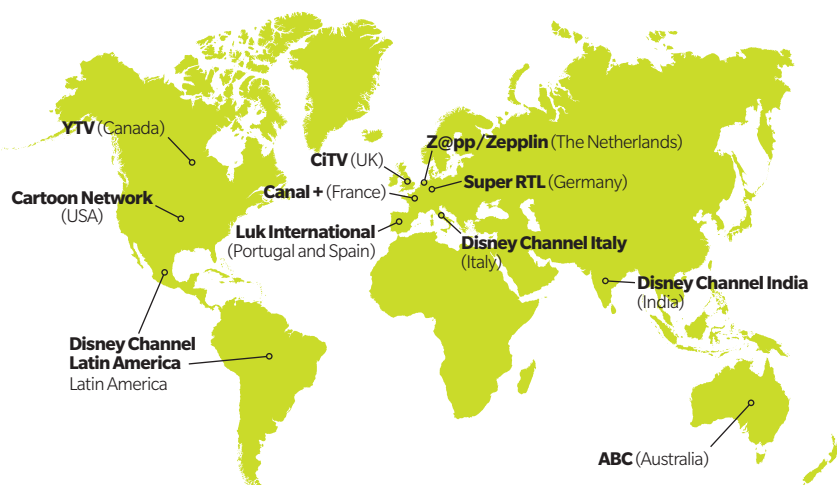
“As a general structure, I think it’s a great idea. But union negotiations, for example, only work when the unions can walk away from the table. The producers can’t walk away from the table,” says Bredin. “It’s a brave attempt, but let’s review it in a year.”

Almost Naked Animals



You know a show's striking the right chord when its publicity starts taking on a life of its own. That's just what's happened to Toronto, Canada-based 9 Story Entertainment's *Almost Naked Animals*. The prodco's president and CEO Vince Commisso was flipping through the August 1 issue of *People* when he came across the series featured in the mag's picks for the summer's best kids shows. "Kind of great," read *People*'s dry, appreciative comment on the show about a group of wacky animals that happen to wear just underwear and run a beachfront hotel. It bowed on Cartoon Network US in June, following its initial launch on YTV (Canada) in January, CiTV (UK) in April and ABC Australia in May.

On-air



9 Story's irreverent series rolls out to non-English territories

So far so good Though 9 Story isn't privy to channel ratings, EVP of business development Natalie Osborne says she's had nothing but positive feedback from the broadcasters that scheduled the series in optimal slots at the outset to attract a target demo of boys six to 11 with the show's healthy love of crazy, gross-out humor. On YTV, the series aired after *SpongeBob SquarePants* on Saturday mornings, as well as at noon on Fridays. In the UK, it followed CiTV's hit series *Horrid Henry*, and went onto strip Monday to Friday at 4 p.m. on Cartoon Network US.

This fall, the series is also rolling out on Canal+ in France and Super RTL in Germany. And the prodco recently announced additional sales to Disney Channel (Italy, India, Latin America), as well as Luk International in Spain and Portugal and NPO's children's channel Z@pp/Zepplin in the Netherlands.

Extra support 9 Story delivered more than completed episodes to help *Almost Naked Animals* cut through on-air. It created a shopping bag full of visual goodies from its library of assets that includes character designs, backgrounds, music and stills broadcasters can use to create wallpaper and other fun digital content for their websites. First produced for YTV, the add-ons also include three simple video games like Stunt Launcher, in which kids launch main character Howie (who dreams of being a stunt dog) from a cannon ball into a pile of watermelons. 9 Story also crafted short music videos featuring the series' crooner Narwhal.

Osborne says that as production for season two starts up this fall, the team is brainstorming ways to refresh this additional content. Ensemble character Duck, who hasn't had many lines thus far, is generating a lot of fan chatter online and may be singled out.

Around the world As the series begins its roll out beyond English-speaking countries, the company will be working closely with local broadcasters on voice casting and sourcing reputable dubbing companies. And 9 Story is also working on tweaking another element of the show for international expansion—the title. "There are different sensitivities to the word naked," says Osborne. Though the show is completely age-appropriate and contains absolutely no risqué humor, she explains the word naked, which tickles the funny bones of English-speaking kids, might not resonate the same way in France or Germany.

Next moves As 9 Story continues to deliver new eps this fall through May 2012, Osborne says she and Commisso will be at MIPCOM working hard on second-season sales. The company has also been developing the brand's L&M strategy with Toronto-based agency The Licensing Shop. At press time, Osborne was finalizing licensee agreements, which she says will be announced throughout the fall. —Kate Calder



These UK kids are making the picture

Those outside the UK may not have heard of The Tate Movie Project. Its resulting short film, *The Itch of the Golden Nit*, rolled out for broadcast on the BBC in July. The film also screened at many art galleries beyond the famed Tate and at other sites across the UK. It will continue playing in Brit cinemas until November. But what's truly interesting is that the art, story and music behind the half-hour Aardman Animations film were created entirely by children.

Thousands of kids across the UK participated in workshops held at The Tate and other galleries, creating their own pieces inspired by great works of art. Additionally, a road show stopped by 55 UK locales and gathered artwork from more than 9,000 children ages five to 13.

The campaign also went online. Aardman Digital, for its part, created a website that attracted more than 22,000 young visitors and featured a comical director who explained the filmmaking process and prompted kids to upload more artwork and vote for their favorite characters. The project also used youth orchestras and preschoolers, armed with simple instruments, to help record the score and various sound effects.

Aardman's Sarah Cox (the film's director) says the company culled the best story and character ideas from the thousands collected during the gallery workshops and handed them over to the script writer. "We focused on a few characters we loved best, so instead of starting with a plot, we'd start with characters and then build around these characters," says Cox. The prodco also got celebrated UK actors including David Walliams (*Little Britain*), Harry Enfield (*Skins*) and David Tennant (*Doctor Who*) on-board to voice the characters.

The resulting plot follows 11-year-old Beanie on a mission to save his parents from Evil Stella and return a special golden nit to its rightful place at the heart of the sun, thereby saving the universe. The Aardman crew's animation style stayed absolutely true to the kids' character and background illustrations, creating a hand-drawn look using Cel-Action2D software.

After coming up with the idea, Aardman and The Tate partnered with the BBC and later received US\$4.8 million in funding from oil company BP and the Legacy Trust UK, a charity that supports culture and sports tied to the 2012 Olympics in London. All profits were put back into the Cultural Olympiad, a four-year celebration designed to inspire creativity in the run-up to the Olympic games. —Kate Calder



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Now Trending—Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



Getting more personal

New York-based Big Tent Entertainment is about to take the personalization software developed by sisterco Pixfusion to the next level. Already licensed to the likes of marketing firm Oddcast, content developer JibJab (creator of the popular *Elf Yourself* viral app) and prodco Jam Media (*Pic Me*, *Funky Fables*), Pixfusion's key patents that allow for head-on-body customization of digital images are being put to test. New online comedy series *The Tom Mule Show* admittedly targets teens and young adults, but we know it doesn't take long for the trickle-down effect to take hold. Essentially, the 52 x five-minute eps of animation will roll out over the course of a year on TheTomMuleShow.com starting in December. The cool part is that viewers will be able to insert their headshots right into the middle of the short episodes, where Tom will proceed to interview them. Viewers will then have the option to purchase the resulting videos for under US\$1 apiece. Big Tent is currently working on myriad applications for the software, including licensing the tech to video game makers. At press time, the company was close to announcing a deal for the very first personalized video game.

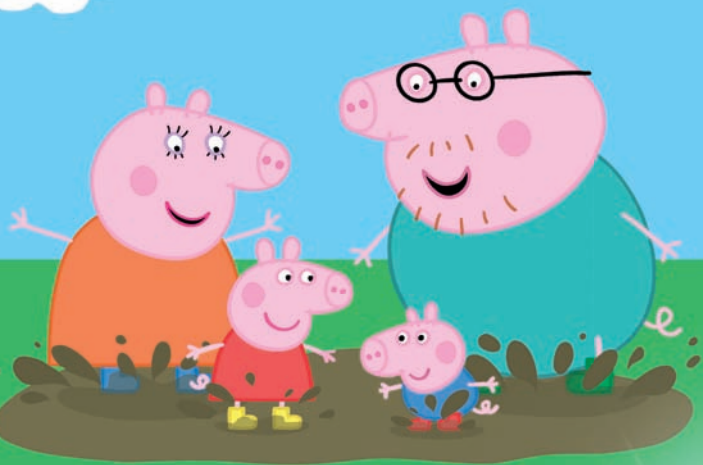
Just for Kids

The Montreal, Canada-based prodco behind the *Just for Laughs* series, which tickles our funny bones on in-flight programming and in between meetings outside of the Palais, is launching a kid-friendly version. *Just Kidding* features children pulling mischievous pranks on



unsuspecting adults using the same no-dialogue approach, in which the audience is in on the gag. Each half-hour features between 10 and 15 one-minute gags carried out by kids ages eight to 16. For example, a group of kids asks a series of passersby to help them cut a giant birthday cake, only to see the rigged cake implode when it's touched, much to the chagrin of helpful passersby. An initial six half-hour eps were produced this summer, in association with Canada's Teletoon (owned by Astral Media and Corus Entertainment). TVA in Quebec will also broadcast the series, and the prodco, also named *Just for Laughs*, has scored a presale with CBBC in the UK. Another 20 eps are in the works, which will shoot during next summer and deliver in December 2012. —Kate Calder

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Joaquín Garrido: jgg@araitmultimedia.es - Aitor García: aitor@araitmultimedia.es

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Hard times

Licensing markets in Spain and Greece bear the brunt of an uncertain economic climate

BY GARY RUSAK

consumer products



While Warner Bros. Consumer Products evergreen IP Looney Tunes is holding its own in the troubled countries, particularly in Spain, its Greek licensing agent has scaled back considerably

The economic outlook for the so-called PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain) nations is as bleak as it's ever been deemed in recent history. Teetering on the brink of default, much ink was spilled this summer on what exactly the European Union should/could do—or not do—to keep the struggling countries afloat. And while Spain and Greece have in the past been lucrative markets for licensed goods, sustained economic pressures have narrowed licensor expectations and shifted the retail landscape in both nations. With consumer budgets shrinking, retailers, broadcasters, licensors and licensees are all feeling the pinch. A survey of the licensing community in both countries reveals that times are indeed tough, tougher even than most realize, but optimism remains a valuable asset that is driving business forward.



SpongeBob SquarePants back-to-school items are still performing well in Spain

Spain

With the unemployment rate hovering around 20%, there is reason to be concerned that consumer spending in Spain is only going to decline. Retail sales numbers are starting to bear this out, with a 7.2% drop in June and 3.9% in July over 2010 numbers.

"The economy is worse than bad, it's awful," says head of Nickelodeon Consumer Products for Iberia José Maria Cendra somewhat bluntly. "The economy really is going down and down," he adds.

Cendra says that a country-wide 20% unemployment rate is actually a low estimate. Certain sectors are edging closer to the 30% mark, with young college-educated workers accounting for a big chunk of that statistic.

Warner Bros. Consumer Products director of licensing for Spain and Portugal Rosa Tevar, however, has taken a slightly more optimistic view. "Economic growth is projected to strengthen gradually, reaching 1% in 2011 and 1.5% in 2012," she says. In addition, she notes that an unemployment rate of 19% could be in the cards as the economy picks up, meaning a slight bump in consumer spending. "We want to think the worst is over and there are some silver linings to the Spanish economy," Tevar says.

Her optimism is echoed by Julian Barbier, head of licensing for Imira Entertainment. He concedes that things are rough, but not as bad as in other PIIGS nations. "The situation is not as bad as in Greece or Portugal," he says. "We don't need Europe to jump in just yet—consumers are still buying licensed goods."

Seeking evergreen shelter

The rule of thumb is that in a crisis, consumers stick with what they know—in licensing that means classic or evergreen properties. And according to those on the ground, the rule has held up in Spain.

"All our classic properties continue to perform well," says Tevar. "Retailers don't want to take many risks and they prefer to carry our well-known properties." She adds that the company's Looney Tunes stable of characters is the company's bread-and-butter in the region, with a wide-ranging program in terms of categories and demographics that start with infant-focused extension Baby Looney Tunes and go right on up to its adult vintage apparel line. Brand-new TV series *The Looney Tunes Show*, which debuted on the country's top kidscaster Clan TV in September, is also bound to give the property a boost.

The continued dominance of Clan TV as a product-driving platform was also mentioned as the prime reason for the continued success of Nickelodeon properties Dora the Explorer and SpongeBob SquarePants in the territory. "SpongeBob and Dora are among the top-seven properties in the territory," says Cendra. "Dora is still really booming." He adds that the company is looking at a strategy similar to Warner Bros., broadening the demographic appeal of its top property in Spain.

"We are going to be enlarging the SpongeBob target age," Cendra says. "The economy doesn't look promising, so we are going to be more about marketing and promotional partnerships and will focus on our key accounts and the Clan TV platform."

And according to Barbier, other properties currently performing well in Spain include Ben 10, Gormiti, Beyblade and Hello Kitty. He also cites Disney Channel as another strong platform on the broadcast side.

Retail realignment

With a fragmented retail market, Tevar reports that Warner Bros. has moved its retail efforts away from small Spanish outlets and is concentrating on international chains such as Inditex, Zara, Bershka, Oysho, Mango and Cortefile.

"In spite of signs of recovery, retailing continued its negative trend in 2011," Tevar says. "The only retailers that are performing well are ones with international presence. We have a solid business with them and it is helping us to maintain sales in this tough environment."

The current climate also seems to be favoring the adoption of direct-to-retail strategies—which Warner Bros. has executed with a number of the aforementioned retailers.

"Our DTR business has grown in scale and importance," Tevar says. "DTR has a stronghold on apparel and has made it possible for apparel to continue to be a main driver for us."

Generally, the retail situation is difficult. Many of the traditional independent outlets are disappearing and larger chains keep moving in. While the current landscape is defined by a glut of apparel and plush inventory, deep discounts and slim margins, there is hope that in the long-run the appearance of more organized and larger retail chains will be good news for the Spanish licensing business.

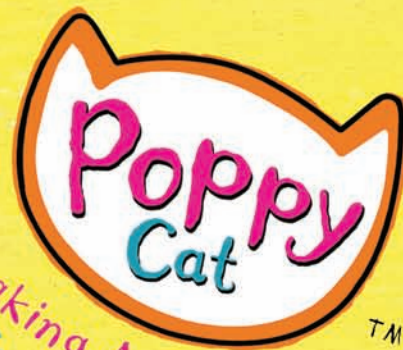
"It's a pretty complicated situation right now," says Cendra. "But I'm still optimistic. In the next 18 to 24 months, the economy will have to start showing some positive signs or it will be bad for everybody, not just licensing."

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Greece

If you think the news coming out of Spain isn't great, it gets worse heading East. Greece has recently had the distinct dishonor of being singled out by Standard & Poor's Credit Rating Service as being pretty much a sure thing to default on its debt before the end of the year. In 2010, the country's estimated GDP or Real Growth Rate registered in the negative at -4.5%.

"Unfortunately it's as bad as everyone thinks," says Paul Berrington, CEO of Greek licensing agency Black & White.

While the unemployment rate reached a record high of 16.6% this summer, the number hides the scores of working poor who have had their wages slashed and their buying power muted. With an estimated 30% of the country employed by the government, cost-cutting measures enacted by government agencies have drastically reduced consumer spending. In fact, salaries and pensions throughout chunks of Greek industry have been slashed by an average of 25%.

The consequences for retailers have been substantial—in short, they are reeling. "According to the government, 23% of retail store fronts have closed so far," says Berrington. "It's reflected on the high street. It doesn't look like a healthy environment for shopping."

Over the past eight months, several key retailers including Atlantic Supermarket, Greece's fifth-largest retailer with 800 employees, declared bankruptcy, as did the country's second-biggest toy and infant products retailer, Kou-Kou, in January.

"The Greek economy overall is facing serious problems," says Themis Sgouras, Warner Bros. Consumer Products agent for Greece and Cyprus and CEO of licensing firm Hellas Press. "The majority of people are going to earn less than they have in the past and the purchasing power of the consumer, in general, has been diminished. We don't even know how this story will end—we have not yet reached the bottom."

Licensing at a standstill

Not surprisingly, in this climate the licensing business has taken a major hit. Berrington says he is telling all his clients to avoid placing any new properties into the market for the time being. "We aren't even offering that service in the market at this point," he says. "Media properties are hurting considerably right now."

Sgouras agrees, but says that as with Spain, the properties still holding their own are the evergreens like Looney Tunes, Tom and Jerry, Scooby-Doo and Barbie. "People might not realize that Greece is a mature market for licensed brands," he says. "The consumer understands the premium that has to be paid for a license. So even in a crisis, there is still hope and opportunity."

Berrington confirms that the performance of some properties including Peanuts, Garfield and UK specialty brand Forever Friends have brought a modicum of stability to the licensed goods market. But to gain a clear view of

the new normal in the Greek licensing business, one only has to look at the operations of Hellas Press. In 2005, its Athens office had 55 employees, but that number has been whittled down to eight. And starting this summer, all operations were split up between various home offices to cut down on overhead. "I think now is the time to say, 'No more offices, we need more sales people instead,'" says Sgouras. "We have reduced our costs and right now are focusing on new business."

Seeds of hope

Berrington points to the launch of Nickelodeon Greece in September 2010 as a small bright spot for the licensing business in the country. "I have been told that some broadcasters are down as much as 35% in terms of ad revenue," says Berrington. "But Nick launched a successful channel that is really showing the locals a thing or two about how to present to children."


"In the next 18 to 24 months, the economy will have to start showing some positive signs or it will be bad for everybody, not just licensing."

—José María Cendra, Nickelodeon Consumer Products, Iberia

Additionally, Sgouras reports that the Star Channel platform has succeeded in delivering children's series to a wide audience in a tough TV market. The success of the platform has supported licensing categories that are still driving revenue in the beleaguered country, most notably back-to-school, publishing and food.

Another high point, much like Spain, is the rationalization of the retail environment. With the decimation of mom-and-pop shops and the diminishing old guard, bigger retailers are amassing more power. For example, the nation's largest toy retailer Jumbo now has 41 stores in Greece and also operates locations in Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania.

"Jumbo is doing very well, even in the crisis," says Sgouras, noting that five new malls have opened in Athens this year despite the retail struggles. Ever the optimist, he says that he is looking at the export market as a way to mitigate the shrinking returns from Greece and is, above all, keeping his chin up.

"We have to see things from a different perspective now," Sgouras says. "We have to look at exports to the rest of the EU and we have to look beyond the bad things. Everybody knows that good things come out of crisis." 

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Hello Maggot

An intro to Wildbrain's gross (yet kind of awesome) new IP

In a crowded marketplace, originality is the key to getting any new property noticed. Well, L.A.-based Wildbrain Entertainment is certainly taking that adage to heart with Hello Maggot, a property introduced to fan boys and tastemakers at San Diego Comic-Con in late July. The division of DHX Media is now planning to take the concept abroad, bowing the IP at Brand Licensing this month.

"Hello Maggot is the most adorable maggot you have ever seen," deadpans Mike Polis, president of Wildbrain Entertainment and EVP of branded entertainment and consumer products at DHX Media. "We just thought it was one of the funnier, cuter and off-center properties we have seen in awhile."

While first pitched to Wildbrain as a TV series, Polis decided that the company would take a different direction with the IP that is still in its larvae stage (yes, pun intended). The colorful stylized insect blobs come with a host of costumes (like the pink and blue bunny outfits pictured), but perhaps what's most striking is their big bright eyes that peek out at the world.

"I thought it made sense as a product first," Polis says. "It's adorable, but a little weird."

And rather than go with a formal launch, Wildbrain is following a strategy that fits the nature of the edgy tween/teen property. It's planning to seed demand at various events and hopefully amass enough momentum to create a targeted specialty retail program.

"We do have a few products in the works," says Polis. "But right now we are concentrating on building a following



The name and look of Hello Maggot were made to grab attention

through social networking on Facebook and Twitter. Our initial objective was to see what kind of resonance it would have with people at Comic-Con, and we were very pleased with those results."

The plush made available at Comic-Con were self-manufactured, but look for Wildbrain to explore that category as a main driver when products hit shelves.

"We are definitely looking at the tween girl demo that still gravitates towards plush," says Polis. "We will also be looking for products with a bit more of an edge to them."

While Polis says that "content will be part of future plans," no moves have been made in that direction. For the time being, the Wildbrain team is content to send Hello Maggot around the world and let the character design speak for itself.

"Building brand awareness is always difficult for new IP," says Polis. "That is why we are going to bring it to London... if we can get them through customs," he muses. —Gary Rusak

Italy's Switchover flexes licensing arm

Rome, Italy-based broadcaster Switchover Media is using its two children's TV platforms, K2 and Frisbee, to leverage the development of an in-house licensing arm.

"It was the next logical step," says content development partner Giuliano Tranquilli. "We all know that TV coverage for kids programming is at the root of licensing success." And Switchover's two digital terrestrial channels have approximately 85% penetration in the Italian market.

K2 is its boy-skewing action/adventure channel, while Frisbee caters to the four to 10 demographic, relying on programming focused on storytelling and a slightly female-skewing audience (roughly 60% of viewers are girls). Combined, the two channels have a larger audience share than key singular

kids channels in the region, including top-rated Boing, owned by Italy's Mediaset and Turner Broadcasting International.

The priority for Switchover's new division is to secure the local licensing rights to a number of series currently airing on the two channels. Notably, the media company does not produce its own content, so 100% of channel programming is licensed. So far, the consumer products arm has secured the Italian rights to The FairlyOdd Parents and will be looking to expand that property's offerings in the coming months. IP owner Toronto, Canada-based Nelvana Enterprises is a key partner for Switchover, and negotiations are ongoing to secure rights to more of its properties, such as Babar. The goal is to land the rights to four or five IPs for each channel.

However, Switchover is not looking to launch standard licensing programs with a focus on plush and apparel, says Tranquilli. "We don't want to do traditional licensing," he says. "We want to build a circle between the channels and the properties. We are going to focus on sponsorships and promotional partnerships."

Tranquilli adds that the company's new licensing arm is very interested in building relationships with independent producers to bring their series to Italian airwaves and give them the added bonus of promotional and marketing support. He believes this is a savvy way to compete with Boing in the Italian market. "The independent producers can be assured that we will be dedicated to their properties because we don't have our own like the bigger channels do," he says. —Gary Rusak

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a big fat snout,
a mischevious smile
and a great big heart



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PlayNetwork
prepped classroom
material based on
Disney's new film,
Winnie the Pooh

Active campaigns

PlayNetwork brings experiential marketing to the kids space

Any parent will tell you that getting a child's attention these days is not easy. That is why experiential marketing and other innovative ways of getting messaging in front of kids is becoming more important when it comes to advertising.

Leading the way in this category is Redmond, Washington-based PlayNetwork. The 15-year-old firm is a provider of in-store entertainment for retail, restaurant and hospitality environments. And its recent promotions with Disney could give the industry a glimpse into the future of marketing to children and their parents.

Last fall, the company undertook a campaign to promote *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse: Space Adventure*. The promotion took place in 600 kids gym facilities throughout the US, including My Gym and Gymboree locations. The series was promoted using multimedia elements like posters, a 30-second video that ran on screens in each location and the distribution of stickers and coloring books, along with email blasts to registered users of the facility and website banner ads. However, the most innovative element might be what Steve Lovell, senior director of advertising and video networks, calls "class integration."

"What we do is build the concept of the program into the activity classes," he says, explaining that teachers will use elements from the promoted content in the activities. For example, if the class is teaching kids to get up and moving, the teacher might invoke some story elements—like Mickey running from an alien—to illustrate the concept and hopefully get results.

Disney was so pleased with the campaign's results that it has since signed PlayNetwork to create promos for Handy Manny, Mickey Mouse Clubhouse and Disney Junior. And this past summer, PlayNetwork crafted a full campaign to coincide with the theatrical release of *Winnie the Pooh*, the latest film to join the beloved franchise.

Lovell says that his company is sensitive to the dangers of over-commercializing these activities and is always striving to find a balance between education and entertainment. "We don't want these classes to seem like a NASCAR event," he says. —Gary Rusak

Licensee Lowdown

The In Thing sweetens up



Who The In Thing is a wholesale toyco based in Lancashire, England. The company cut its teeth roughly a decade ago on the Pokémon craze and continued to be something of a trendmaker by securing early distribution deals for Ty's Beanie Babies and Webkinz from Ganz. "We pride ourselves in knowing what kids want before they even know," says marketing executive Kieran Murphy.

With a wholesale arm that boasts more than 1,900 products, The In Thing is considered one of the UK's leading toy distributors. But it is now making a move into developing its own confectionary products for both inbound and outbound licensing.

What The company is focusing its efforts on Magic Choc, which launched in July. The product is a mix between a traditional confectionary item and modelling compound. "It's made from 100% Belgium chocolate and the heat from your hands turns the hard chocolate

into a mouldable compound. It becomes pliable and you can make any number of things," says Murphy.

The launch item contains various chocolates and an ideas booklet that includes step-by-step instructions on how to make a rocket or a dog, for example. Currently, the product (US\$9.79 apiece) is on store shelves in the UK, South Africa, Dubai and Australia, and will also be available at UK locations of Toys 'R' Us this fall.

Licensing Opportunity Murphy says that the strategy for Magic Choc is to distribute the generic version as widely as possible before inking any licensing deals. However, licensing is certainly on the company's radar. "We are in talks with a couple of the biggest licensors in the UK," says Murphy. "We will be looking for licenses that people recognize and then decide whether the license will relate to the essence of the brand."

Contact Sonia Naseem, marketing manager (44-845-365-3030, sonia@theinthing.com) —Gary Rusak



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Nick Consumer Products keeps **SpongeBob** growing with new international initiatives

Soaking it up



SpongeBob SquarePants is casting off from Bikini Bottom and heading into international waters with a goal of diversifying and growing Nickelodeon's consumer demographic base abroad.

But how can the iconic sponge—star of 178 TV episodes seen via syndication and Nick channels in 141 territories in 37 languages, and with global consumer product sales in excess of US\$11 billion—soak up even more consumer impressions?

The minds over at Nickelodeon Consumer Products Creative, based in London, have been toying around with a variety of initiatives over the past two seasons and have developed a broad range of new initiatives and style guide artwork (see “Stylin’ SpongeBob” on the right) that will earn the famous sponge his sea legs in more international venues.

“SpongeBob SquarePants has been an international icon for the past 10 years, and Viacom International Media Networks is continuing to ensure that he will be an icon for the next 10. We are bringing him to new markets, developing the creative style guides to keep the brand fresh and evolving existing platforms to include new dimensions such as pro-social partnerships,” says Steve Grieder, EVP of Nickelodeon and program sales for VIMN.

This focus on charitable outreach took center stage in Russia with Nickelodeon Russia entering into a unique partnership with The Naked Heart Foundation, a children's charity that aims to provide safe and inspiring play environments for Russian children. An exclusive VIP auction kicked off exhibit “Absorbent: A SpongeBob World” with all proceeds being used to build themed playgrounds across Russia. The free interactive exhibit, meanwhile, was created in conjunction with Beeline,

the country's major telecom operator. Running between September 15 and October 2 at Moscow's Flacon Design Plant, it featured The Want to Draw! Studio, where kids explored their creativity through various arts and crafts workshops based on popular Nick properties, including SpongeBob.

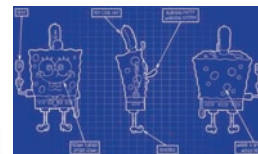
In Asia, integrated marketing partnerships will buoy the property's popularity via a deal with Star Cruises for a series of 19 cruises aboard the vessel SuperStar Virgo that's sailing between November 18 and December 30. Passengers will experience a full range of competitions, games and shows that are specially customized for everyone in the family, as well as a brand-new and exclusive half-hour live show, *SpongeBob's Krabby Patty Celebration*.

And faced with the challenge of keeping SpongeBob Schwammkopf fresh in the mature German market, VIMN is introducing multiplatform initiatives to elevate the iconic brand, such as “Think Happy Day” programming stunts, integrated retail campaigns that include a strategic partnership with Toys ‘R’ Us for an exclusive birthday basket, and promotional partnerships with international brands such as Nestlé.

The property is also keeping its feet wet in Spain. The first range of SpongeBob products released in 2010 helped the IP become the country's number-two brand and its fastest-growing brand ever. SpongeBob has also been a standout in Spanish publishing, selling one million licensed books in less than nine months, as well as landing mass-market promotions with major local companies such as Nutrexpa across brands like Phoskitos, Tosta Rica, Cola Cao and Okey, and a two-month promotion in national newspaper *El País*. —Dawn Wilensky

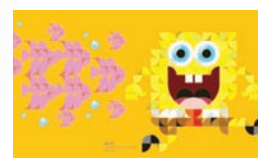
Stylin’ SpongeBob

The iconic Nick property's Euro style guide recently got a makeover in an effort to widen its demographic reach to teens and adults. Let's take a peek.



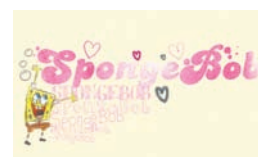
Tween-age dream

“SpongeBob SketchPants” and “SpongeBob Blueprint” have been developed for the tween demo and tap into the trend of sketch and diagrammatic graphic styles.



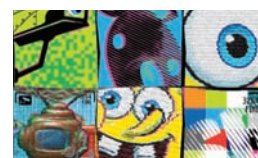
Teen style

“Creative Youth” finds SpongeBob reborn for teens through the use of interlocking geometric shapes and trend-driven color palettes.



Cheeky Sponge

“DoodleBob” also targets young adults by using simple silhouettes of SpongeBob, layered patterns and an eclectic mix of recognizable objects from the world of Bikini Bottom. Look for apparel that uses cheeky phrases like “Hello world, may I take your order?”



The core

New international designs like “SpongeBob Sea-veillance,” which peers through the lens at life in Bikini Bottom, cater to his core fans, boys and girls ages five to 11.

—Dawn Wilensky

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Loving the battlefield

BY ERIN MILLER

Nickelodeon's newest research reveals boys' eclectic tastes in content that includes action, horror and comedy

In part one of our latest Kaleidoscope study, we took a sneak-peek into the world of boys ages seven to 12. From sports to TV and more, our goal is to gain a better understanding of what boys engage in and how they're spending time. In part two of our study, we continue to dive into the ever-evolving cultural landscape of boys, taking a look at their movie and video game choices, and exploring how they choose to engage with the content in which they're immersed daily.

When it comes to movies, boys are straddling the line between family-friendly picks and adult features. Boys didn't shy away from mentioning family favorites such as *The Smurfs* and the Harry Potter and Diary of a Wimpy Kid series. But they were also quick to mention action movies geared towards older audiences, as well as other adult-targeted comedies, as movies of interest. According to these boys, horror, action and comedy are the most appealing types of movies to watch. When it comes to horror, some are already turning to R-rated movies, as age-appropriate options don't seem to be meeting their needs—or perhaps expectations—within this genre. Whether parents are allowing boys to watch horror movies or not, the fact is that boys find this genre exciting and buzz-worthy among friends. Superhero movies, however, are doing a good job of feeding their action appetites, and they're turning to everything from animation and Adam Sandler movies to *The Hangover* for their comedy fix. This dip into adult-oriented movies tends to take hold with boys at around age nine.

Movies aren't the only category in which boys are exposed to and engaged with adult-oriented content. Video games that are rated M for Mature offer a sophistication and excitement

that's hard for boys to resist. We know that boys—and girls for that matter—are very aware of which games are appropriate for them in their homes. (Age isn't as much a factor here as are household rules, and it really depends on what rules are upheld within each individual's home.)

Whether these young boys are allowed to play mature games at home or not, they're finding ways to play them in places such as their friends' houses or other family members' homes. While this shouldn't mislead you into believing that boys are abandoning age-appropriate video games, the fact remains that they're engaging with *Mario* alongside *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (an overwhelming favorite among the study's group of boys), which is perhaps raising expectations of what they're looking for in video games.

When it comes to how boys engage with content, TV remains the most-preferred vehicle. Online streaming tends to take place among boys ages nine and up, often through certain internet sites and subscription services like Netflix. When it comes to Netflix, several of the boys said they use a family membership to stream content primarily through their web-enabled consoles such as the Xbox and Wii. As boys get older and engage more with mobile phones and devices, Netflix also popped up as a popular app to download. This is yet another way boys are keeping themselves constantly—and instantly—connected to the TV shows and movies they love. **k**

For more information, contact Kaleidoscope@nick.com

In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumers, the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family has created Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.

Muse of the Month

Oliver and Little Orphan Annie



Free from social pressures, one tween holds onto happily ever after

If you need an expert on Little Orphan Annie, Dorothy, Heidi, Ariel or Pippi, look no further than Oliver, an 11-year-old from Colorado. Granted, it's not typical for tween boys to be into stories about feisty girls, but Oliver is a unique and special one.

Oliver was born with Prader-Willi Syndrome, a genetic disorder that makes him feel constantly hungry, and also requires him to have a teacher by his side throughout the school day. He doesn't get much freedom in his daily routine, and he generally understands why. Consequently, in his free time, he relishes books and movies that have wildly independent kid characters. Annie is a particular favorite—he has a vast collection of vintage

comic books, dolls and games, and he has even named his dog Sandy. He's also really into the magical stories of the Disney Princesses because in his words, "The prince kisses her, and they fall in love and get married the next day. Usually you have to get to know each other first."

Oliver goes to a mainstream school, but he knows that in some ways he's different, and he and his classmates accept this. As such, while most kids experience social pressures that influence their attitudes and preferences, Oliver is free from feelings of judgment and develops interests based entirely on what speaks to him emotionally. His passions emerge from the heart, which is wholly satisfying.

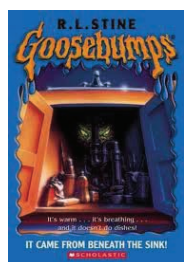
We had not heard of Prader-Willi syndrome before Oliver and his family brought it to our attention. Learning about the condition helped shed light on yet another variation of how kids learn. The blanket term "special needs" can of course mean anything from physical challenges to cognitive issues to social-emotional sensitivities, or an infinite combination of those things. The more we learn, the more we can create media and products that speak to kids with different needs.

Bet your bottom dollar that most kids would find it refreshing and empowering to see media content that veers away from social stereotypes and includes kids who have a different sensibility as a matter of course.

—Sarah Chumsky and the team at Insight Kids

insight kids Insight is a research and strategy firm that inspires its clients to build innovative and impactful experiences for kids and families. To be further inspired find us at www.insightkids.com or www.insightkidsblog.com or email thegrownups@insightkids.com.

Cool or Not? The supernatural book series edition



Goosebumps series

Boys 8 to 11 (211)	Girls 8 to 11 (209)	Boys 12 to 15 (211)	Girls 12 to 15 (227)		Boys 8 to 11 (212)	Girls 8 to 11 (201)	Boys 12 to 15 (206)	Girls 12 to 15 (209)
27.5%	24.9%	13.3%	15%	Totally way cool *	41%	42.3%	27.2%	27.3%
17.1%	16.3%	17.1%	12.8%	Very cool *	19.8%	21.9%	14.1%	13.4%
27%	22%	27%	27.3%	Kinda cool *	18.4%	18.4%	22.3%	23.4%
11.4%	15.3%	19.4%	23.3%	Not cool *	9.4%	8.5%	18%	19.1%
17.1%	21.5%	23.2%	21.6%	Totally un-cool *	11.3%	9%	18.4%	16.7%
12.8%	15.7%	13.2%	9.2%	Don't know what it is	12%	18%	15.9%	16.4%



Percy Jackson and the Olympians series

* Excludes "Don't know what it is" responses



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay's June/July 2011 Trend Tracker. These one-of-a-kind research reports are published 10 times a year and provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids' likes, dislikes and trends gathered through in-school surveys with US kids ages five to 15. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or bob@kidsay.com).



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Apple and the law of gravitation

Kids Industries takes a closer look at the numbers behind the adoption of mobile and tablet devices and apps among US and UK children ages three to eight—and their parents

BY GARY POPE

Websites are dead. Well, they're not quite dead, but they're certainly suffering a nasty and terminal case of the apps. Let me explain: According to Cisco Systems, the world will have 15 billion connected devices by 2015. And those devices will be in the hands of just four billion people. That's 3.75 devices per man, woman, child and babe-in-arms. Assuming you're reading this on, say, October 22, that's just 1,164 days, 1,163

sleeps, or a little more than three years from now.

It turns out the gatekeepers aren't just passing back their hardware anymore. They're passing it down, reloading their old tech with content for their kids and leaving them to it, and so we're about to learn what Digital Native really means.

Watch a child with an iPad. Now watch one using a website. There's a reason that kids engage more with a touchscreen—it's easier, it's intuitive, and they're able to use it at a younger age. (The hand/eye coordination required to use a touchscreen interface is achieved in most children by the time they are around nine months old, while a computer, keyboard and mouse are out of reach until the age of four.) And once they are able, children most often use the computer to get a quick fix of Miniclip or YouTube between other activities. So it's not difficult to see why an

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app that launches in four seconds (including booting the device), as opposed to a branded website that you'll get to after about four minutes of Windows chugging to life, will inherit the eyeballs. Apps are a quick and instant fix of fun that cost around US\$1 apiece. And if they're well-made, they'll keep the attention of those eyeballs for weeks.

But what's the reality of this brave new world of apps and tablets? No one seemed to know, so my team at Kids Industries spoke with more than 2,200 parents and children in the US and the UK to find out. We asked them about cost and purchase drivers, what makes a good app and what makes a bad app. We also worked with children as young as three and as old as 14. However, these pages deal with children ages three to eight and their parents—there's only so much room for the tip of the iceberg.

Devices of choice

Unsurprisingly, children in this demographic are likely to be using apps on their parents' device rather than on their own, with 53% using their parents' iPhones and 15% using their parents' iPads. However, increasingly children are fiddling with their own devices—52% of children in our survey own their own app-capable device, 8% own an iPhone, 11% possess app-capable smart phones, 20% have an iPod Touch (12% of three- to five-year-olds), and 9% have their own iPad (6% of three- to five-year-olds). And as dad trades up and prices come down, these numbers are going to keep growing.

Parents consider the use of technology to be educational for this age group, with entertainment value emerging as a factor when their kids reach age six. There's also the notion that apps should be both fun and educational. Since individuals (big and small) learn roughly 15% more if they have a laugh while learning, there's nothing wrong with that. Well, except that developers continue to churn out well-meaning "fun learning" apps that are not really fun and provide very little educational value, leading a shocking 97% of parents to believe that there are too many poor apps on the market—and they would be right.

Most parents (60%) do not believe technology necessarily equates to lethargy and "unhealthy play" in their children, explaining that balance is key and regulating app time is necessary. This same set of parents also says their children are using the traditional computer significantly less.

Interestingly, in terms of location and use, 78% of educational apps were played in the home and 50% of entertainment apps were played out of home. Clearly, the devices are being used as gob-stoppers out of home and as tools for educational development while at home. And that development is perceived to be significant. A full 77% believe that their child's use of a tablet device helps them learn how to solve problems, and that exact same 77% believe it helps their kids develop creative thinking. It's all good stuff—provided the app does what its marketing material says it will.

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What parents will pay for

The fact that 30% of parents feel a digital screen is usually needed to keep their children entertained is a big concern for Kids Industries. Broadly speaking, we found that attempts by developers to replicate more traditional play patterns in an app were largely ineffective and unengaging. As much as they love this screen stuff, and we wouldn't have jobs without it, children need real play, too. The wonderful thing about the world of apps, as far as kids are concerned, is that their opportunity to pester—and get away with it—is off the charts. The App Store is a thinly veiled digital candy dealer. And compared to a request inspired by viewing a TV ad, there is no barrier to getting what a kid wants. It's just you, your device, your mom and a request for a dollar. Nag just enough, and if it's perceived as educational, you're going to get your way. But kids should ask their dads—they are six times more likely to buy the app than moms.

Cash is the reason most developers get into apps, yet the pricing strategies of the marketplace continue to fluctuate, and we're all waiting to see where pricing lands. Interestingly, there are marked differences between the US and the UK. Here are some numbers. US respondents paid US\$3.26 for their last app and believe a good app should cost around US\$3.28. However, they are willing to pay up to US\$3.58 for a good app.

UK respondents paid US\$3.81 for their last app and believe a good app should cost around US\$3.85. And they are willing to pay US\$4.22 for a good app.

In the specific kids six to eight bracket, US parents value a good app at US\$3.68, will pay US\$3.95 and actually paid US\$4.19 for their last app. In the UK the picture is very different—one of the very few differences to emerge throughout the study. UK parents of kids ages six to eight last paid US\$3.38 and believe a good app should cost US\$4.17, but would be willing to pay up to US\$4.56. (There's a strategy lurking in there somewhere for you.)

The parents we spoke with in both countries had downloaded an average of 6.8 apps over the last quarter, averaging one app every 12 days. That's 27.2 apps purchased for their children each year, or an annual spend of US\$100 or so.

Parental (non)involvement

While the majority of parents (95%) say they interact with their children while they are using apps, they rarely look for a parent/child participation element when choosing one. Parents prefer casual interaction or an assisting role, rather than being required to participate directly. They use the device similarly to how TV is often employed—as a babysitter. And they feel alright with doing so because 65% of three- to five-year-olds and 87% of six- to eight-year-olds can use apps without adult help or instruction.

A child's desire or request for an app is overwhelmingly the biggest reason for purchasing a download, according to 30% of parents, and a further 17% say it is the secondary reason for buying. Child development and education (20%), entertainment outside of home (19%) and the introduction of technology at a young age (17%) are also important reasons parents gave for downloading an app.

And, of course, parents respond to their children's requests. There are fewer barriers to purchase than perhaps any other commercial transaction involving the family—all you need are those credit card digits and a world of fun is at your finger tips. That's a great motivator if you're seven. But the same is true of app purchases as of anything else that involves pestering—it's all fine if the parent sees the value. However, if it's a bad app and the parents can't see the benefit, then you're going to achieve nothing except the devaluation of your brand equity by asking kids to pester for sub-standard goods. Get the product right—for the child's and parent's sake.

Getting there faster

Monetary incentives aside, the greatest values and developmental experiences aren't necessarily in the app, but in the application.

Consider Laurence, age two. His favorite book is *The Gruffalo*. His favorite app is *Talking Rex*—a voice emulator. So as his little brain has started to understand what it means to nurture, he's connected his two favorite things. In fact, he was happily talking away to the screen, assuming Rex was real, of course, when like a bolt out of the blue he yelled "Wait!" at the digital dinosaur. And he ran off. He reappeared 30 seconds later with a big grin and a copy of *The Gruffalo*. He sat down, opened his book and started reading to Rex. (Not actually reading, he's two, after all.) And in that one simple act, he experienced social, cognitive and emotional development simultaneously. It may be no different than a child reading to his teddy bear, but the app allowed this to happen while a traditional website could not. So long live the app, or whatever comes next. **k**



Gary Pope is a co-founder of the UK-based specialist family strategy and creative agency Kids Industries (www.kidsindustries.com). © Kids Industries. 2011.

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Less is more

Moonbot takes the iPad's visual capabilities to new heights in groundbreaking eBook

Reading between the lines Figuring out where the kids eBook industry is headed has become a trickier feat with new developers springing up daily. Yet Shreveport, Louisiana-based Moonbot Studios is looking to blur existing lines between text, animation and user engagement and has managed it successfully in its first book app, *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*.

The short film-meets-eBook is the brainchild of author and illustrator William Joyce, who's designed characters for animation studios like Pixar, DreamWorks and Disney. He has also put his experience in digital animation to use as a partner at the creative storytelling studio, which was formed

two years ago in the wake of a post-hurricane Katrina film-development renaissance in the region. "Shreveport is a big hot spot for film production because of the tax incentives. It's one of busiest places for film development outside of L.A.," says Brandon Oldenburg, a creative partner at the company, which currently employs a staff of 30. "What we ideally want to do here is create apps with interactive components that are also movies. And the best thing about the iPad is that you can be innovative about storytelling. There's not one name for it—a book, an app, a film."

Out of the gate As the company's first project, Oldenburg says *Morris Lessmore* provided the only opportunity to make a good first impression. "We weren't thinking about what was going to make us money or what the demographic needs were. We saw the iPad as an amazing device and wanted to let people know that this is the level of quality to expect from a storytelling standpoint." Perhaps the largest contributing factor to the app's early success (since its May launch, it has appeared on Apple's official national and international press tour and hit number-one at the App Store) is its subtlety. The book features interactive activities on each of its pages as part of the illustration, but none of the components are accompanied by explicit prompts. "We actually threw out 80% of the wacky ideas we had," he says. "We wanted to keep it simple, not spell out too much and leave it to the user to discover." So a child may miss one page's flying tornado scene during his or her first read, but will likely catch it on successive read-throughs, which Oldenburg says only increases the product's shelf life.

Next up In preserving Moonbot's own shelf life in an increasingly competitive industry, Oldenburg says the company is continuing to develop apps and IPs alongside its film projects. Through the creation of this first eBook, the company was able to grow its interactive division by four. This expanding division has its eye primarily on the music video apps space, as well as on developing for additional media beyond iOS platforms. —Wendy Goldman Getzler

The Digits Numbers that speak volumes about kids and technology

Watching TV—whether on the boob tube, a mobile device or the web—has still got it, with US viewership increasing by **22 minutes** per month per person over last year (Nielsen)

A UK-based study has found that children are using up to **five** screens at one time, including mobile phones, laptops, games consoles and TV (Bristol and Loughborough Universities)

Dangerous liaisons?
A full **70%** of 12- to 17-year-olds use sites like Facebook and MySpace, and those who spend any time daily on these sites are more likely to smoke, drink or use drugs (CASA Columbia)



photo: viZZual.com

More than **50%** of smartphone and tablet users play games on their devices, and as such, nearly two-thirds of tablet owners are chucking traditional portable gaming devices (Chadwick Martin Bailey)

Walmart-owned video streaming service Vudu has picked up tremendous pace in 2011, becoming the **#3** digital movie downloading service in the US behind Apple's iTunes and Microsoft's Zune Video Marketplace (IHS)

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Sony goes head first

What it is

Personal entertainment is about to get *really* personal. Sony has officially unveiled its new head-mounted display device, named the HMZ-T1 Personal 3D Viewer. It simulates the viewing experience of a 62.5-foot screen, showcasing 2D and 3D content that runs the gamut from feature films to gaming and music.



How it works

To achieve that edge-of-your-seat home theater experience, the device features surround sound and an optical lens that projects a 45-degree horizontal viewing angle. The HMZ-T1 achieves HD picture quality that makes full use of the organic LED display's high contrast, color reproducibility and fast response. And a corresponding processor makes the device compatible with gaming consoles, cable boxes, Blu-ray players and video cards via any normal HDMI connection.

What it means

The device hits Japan in November. Its price tag, which rings in at just under US\$800, is undoubtedly a hefty investment for head gear. Nonetheless, it is clearly one of the most ambitious—if not futuristic—offerings in Sony's long list of 3D devices, and it fits right in with the ongoing trend of customizable entertainment. While this particular tech is not recommended for kids or for those with a weak stomach, it will be interesting to watch if any advancements—and copycats—pop up, given the robust amount of kid-friendly 3D film and gaming content out there.

—Wendy Goldman Getzler



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The **money maze**



**Gap financing.
Private capital.
Multiple equity partners.
How are prodcos currently navigating an
increasingly convoluted path to production?**

BY GARY RUSAK





Getting from one end to the other on any kids production never involves a straightforward path. In fact, following what looks like a clear-cut approach one day will leave you bumping into walls and other obstacles the next. However, the production community is not often one to cry uncle and call it quits, even if it means retracing steps to embark on the path to completion all over again. Luckily, with international cooperation at a high ebb and expert financiers that see the potential of generating revenue in an industry subject to more exploitation avenues than ever before, deals are getting done and projects are finding the money. While the days of selling to one network, hooking up a distributor and then closing the gap (that piece not covered by the above sales) with advances might be in the past, there are still ways to get a production fully financed, despite myriad obstacles.

More platforms, less money Despite what you might think, putting together financing isn't any easier because of the explosion of digital platforms in need of content—in the kids space, they have yet to play any significant role in the precarious business of putting together the cash to make a production viable.

"There are more and more platforms so there are more places to sell," says Sander Schwartz, EVP and head of children's programming and family entertainment at FremantleMedia Enterprises.

"There are so many platforms and the audience is so fragmented that getting something on air isn't difficult, but figuring out the financing and how to actually turn a profit is more challenging than ever," Schwartz contends.

The notion that "it ain't easy" is widely accepted in the production community.

"There is nothing simple about financing any production," says Malcolm Bird, consultant for traditional and digital media at International Creative License and former SVP of AOL Kids & Teens. "Anyone who is in the production

business at the moment is going to find it incredibly hard to fund their program."

And the current economic uncertainty in the US and Europe especially, has made the process of completing the puzzle challenging, says Tatiana Kober, president of Bejuba! Entertainment. The Canadian company specializes in rights management, co-productions, financing, third-party acquisitions, licensing and merchandising, and international program sales. "European broadcasters are purchasing series, but every decision is taking more time," she says. "What we have been finding is that the broadcasters are not making decisions quickly and they are holding off—with the decision-making up in the air, it is hard to sew up other deals."

Juan-Carlos Jeffrey is a partner with Cameron Thomson (See "An alternative route," page 92), a financing company that focuses on slate productions in the entertainment world with a toe in the kids industry. He agrees that money and partners have been harder to find over the last few years.

"Since 2008, there is not enough money out there," Jeffrey says. "The money is hard to find, but it's not as hard to find as you might think. Up to 2008, any production was being funded. There were banks, pension funds and a lot of other equity investors out there. Some of that has disappeared but not all of it. The money got smaller, but you could say it got smarter, too. Investors are now looking for the right production, not just any production."

Bridging the gap When putting together a typical financing structure, the last piece of the deal is referred to as the deficit. As happens with corporate language, the term itself has evolved into something meant to sound more innocuous.

"The term now is 'gap,'" says Mary Bredin, VP of development and acquisitions for Toronto, Canada-based guru Studio. "It's all about the art of terminology and positive spin in a world where there is no money and things are getting harder and harder."

In a typical production, once a commissioning broadcaster has been signed up and a distributor, and perhaps a broadcast license or two have been sold, there is usually a shortfall in financing that needs to be raised by the producer.

"You are always going to need a distributor or a co-production partner and distribution deal, and maybe a DVD deal, and even a licensing deal to close the circle," says Mike Watts, co-founder of UK-based Novel Entertainment. "The thing that producers do—that they don't like to do—to fill that gap is defer their fees until the financing is complete."

Watts says that while it's a last resort, one might be surprised how often it's taken because of the dearth of financial institutions in the UK that are willing to gap-finance.

"TV is hard," Watts says, speaking from a UK perspective. "The financial institutions are not plentiful, and usually it means giving up some equity."

In North America, the financial agents willing to get involved in gap-financing a production seem to be more readily available.

Family can be an absolute pain in the neck!



A promotional image for the TV series 'Young Dracula'. The cast is posed in a dark, gothic-style room. In the center, a woman with long dark hair and a red patterned top sits on a large, ornate chair. To her left, a man in a black suit is adjusting his white shirt. To her right, a young man in a black jacket and blue shirt stands with one hand on the chair. In the foreground, a young boy in a plaid shirt sits on the floor. Behind the woman on the chair, another woman with short black hair and a black jacket stands. The background features a large framed picture of a wolf, a mounted deer head, and red patterned curtains. The title 'YOUNG DRACULA' is written in large, stylized red letters at the bottom.

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CONTENT
FILM TELEVISION DIGITAL



DHX Media (maker of *Monster Math Squad*, seen here) often relies on its distribution arm to trigger production

Aver Partners In the course of interviews for this article, one name kept coming up—Aver Partners, based in Toronto, Canada. Run by well-known media financier Peter Sussman, the firm is one of the recognized private lenders willing to take on the financing of TV productions. Notoriously publicity shy, a partner for the firm did take part in the discussion under the condition that her name not be used. She confirmed that Aver Partners does do deficit-financing for productions. However, she says the firm is much more than a banking institution.

"We are like a bank, but much more entrepreneurial," she says. "We are able to wrap our heads around the deals. We know the kids business, the broadcasters and the players."

She says the firm does not just consider backing a production based on whether or not there is a market for it, but instead takes a more discerning financial look at every partner involved.

"A broadcaster is looking at whether the show will get ratings," she says. "I'm looking at whether the entire production is sellable. Are all the different aspects viable? Do I have sales to people who are bankable? Are all the sales currently attached to it real? Will all the customers pay what they said they would, when they said they would? It's more about a financial transaction for us than content."

If these conditions are met, Aver Partners might be interested in fronting the money to close the financing circle. Of course, money isn't given away, and although it is impossible to give an average on the cost of borrowing (as every deal Aver structures is unique), it's fair to say it will be significant. It can be assumed that the money made available by this source is going to come with a high premium attached that exceeds average lending rates. In some cases, Aver will play the role of strategic partner. This gives the lender a more flexible position, allowing it to take on a variety of different roles surrounding the production. The company then has the potential to recoup its

investment on the back-end, as well as have a say in further exploitation of rights including digital, distribution and other ancillary revenue streams. Because of the distinct nature of each individual deal, and the many players involved, it would be unfair to break down the percentages absolutely. Suffice it to say, Aver is in the business of gap-financing productions and is creative and innovative in the many avenues it will take to recoup its investment and then some.

Roles redistributed FremantleMedia Enterprises was cited by many as a first-class distributor in the industry. And it is a sign of the growing importance of distributors that Schwartz downplays that single facet of the company's business. "I'm not really doing distribution deals," he says. "I'm doing co-production deals. We are investing in the show, and what we bring to the table is proven expertise in the kids space in terms of sales, marketing and creative management."

Fernando Szew, founding partner and CEO of L.A.-based MarVista Entertainment, a production company and distributor that has recently put co-production *16 Wishes* together with Disney Channel, agrees that distributors are becoming actively involved almost at the outset of a project—and it's important in triggering additional funds for a production. "Other financiers want to see that distribution plan in place early," he says, stressing that the days of selling into one territory and calling it a day have long past. "Now success means you have to be outside just one or two territories."

For Toronto, Canada-based DHX Media, its distribution arm is a key part of the operation. "We are truly integrated," says SVP Anne Loi. "Traditionally, we have a producer who goes and finds a distributor, but they are often not as invested as the producers themselves. We think this is a better way to do business. Our product will do better because our distributor is as invested as the producer."

Loi sees the creative input of companies with distribution expertise as a growing factor in the industry and a reaction to the increased pressure on putting together a comprehensive finance plan.

"The trend is that all these guys, who used to be last in, want to get in earlier so they have more of a say when the rights are being divided up," Loi says.

Of course, having your own distribution arm doesn't mean that productions are fully financed from the outset. As Loi will testify, there are still a lot of partners to wrangle.

Foremost, a series can have worldwide distribution lined up, but if it doesn't have the initial backing of a major broadcaster the production is sunk.

"We won't make a move until the broadcaster orders," says Loi, who even after securing a broadcaster has to negotiate an equitable deal between the different interests.

"The broadcasters will say 'If you want to work with us, this is the deal we need,' and the financier or investor will say 'If you want to work with us, this is the deal we need.' These can be diametrically opposed. Sometimes we'll just go for whoever has the bigger chunk of money and put the deal together from there."

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Strategic navigation While there is no one model that clearly delineates how to finance a production, most experts interviewed agreed that the ideal is to avoid relying on purely financial partners (read venture capitalist and banks) and fill all the gaps by enlisting a slew of strategic partners.

"Strategic financing is a much more attractive source of funding," says Szew. "That way, you don't just get capital, but you have the added benefit and bonus of a core competency that can complement your specialty. That is how we do it."

An alternative route?

Juan-Carlos Jeffrey from the firm Cameron Thompson, an entertainment financing firm with offices in Toronto, Milan and London, holds a different perspective on gap-financing, one that turns the traditional model on its head.

"How about thinking of the 'other bit,' the deficit, that piece that is left over as the first step, and not the last step," he posits.

Jeffrey's firm offers production companies that meet its criteria, a means to raise the gap first and then fill in the rest through the traditional venues of distribution sales, broadcast deals and advances from merchandising and licensing deals.

"We will go out and strategically raise that bit for you and be an investor," Jeffrey says. "We will deliver that fund from the outset." He adds that with that chunk of change in its back pocket, a prodco can have more options, leverage and bargaining power when sourcing traditional funding.

"There is a little bit of education that is needed in the production community," he admits. "They need to stop thinking of it as a gap and think of it as a core instead."

Of course, Cameron Thompson has to look at each slate using a variety of criteria, including what the distribution and licensing rights are potentially worth, who the partners are and what the company's track record is like.

Cameron Thompson will not deficit-finance single projects and is chiefly interested in long-term, multiple-property slates.

"We have to look at a whole package, break it down and pull it back together again," says Jeffrey. "What we look for is a plan that demonstrates that you can make it and know who to sell it to. Also the company should have an ability to execute and a track record of success."

Jeffrey insists that as more pressure is put on the market, there will be a greater need for the upfront financing Cameron Thompson provides. He can only shake his head at the current economics of creative production and believes that a major sea-change is in the offing.

"If I'm Coca-Cola and I develop a brand of liquid, I'll go to Walmart and ask it to buy the product, but first I will want 45% of the purchase price upfront," he begins. "Then I'm going to manufacture it and come back to Walmart in a year and tell them to sell it. Oh, and it might not taste or look exactly like I said it would. Walmart would laugh in my face. But this seems like an accepted practice in this industry. Why does it fly?" —Gary Rusak

Take MarVista's production of *16 Wishes* with Disney Channel, for example. MarVista produced the movie, on budget and with a chunk of its own money. And Disney, in turn, brought to the table its network reach and one member of its stable of teen stars.

Bill Schultz, CEO of new prodco Home Plate Entertainment, agrees with the approach and says that pulling together a wide range of partners is one way smaller producers can compete against larger ones that can completely finance a production. "I think strategic partnerships still represent the most money available," he says. "It is a way for companies to gain critical mass without adding overhead."


Schultz says when he was putting together a deal for *Rob Dyrdek's Wild Grinders*, a new teen featuring the titular MTV personality and skateboarder, he first secured a broadcast commitment from NickToons US, then brought in his former employer Moonscoop as the series' global distributor. He then had to line up Telegael in Ireland, Copernicus Studios in Canada and Agogo Corporation in China to make the show a reality. Part of the process is aligning with partners that have access to different markets, like China, and also partners that have access to "soft money," i.e. tax breaks or government grants, which are significant in Canada and France.

Of course, having all these partners from the outset means that cooperation and compromise are part of the production package. "You really have to resist the temptation to go it alone," Schultz says, adding that creatively it is important for each partner to know exactly what it's bringing to the table. Being upfront in terms of what is most important to each interest in the final product is the key to avoiding disputes further on down the road, he stresses.

Schwartz at FremantleMedia concurs. "It's about bringing in more partners in more ways to patch together the finance quilt," he says. "There are more parties than ever and more options than ever. It's not new parties, but there are more independent producers, more broadcasting platforms, more merchandising and licensing people, advertisers and sponsors."

One of the latest FremantleMedia productions is *Mon-suno*, a boys action teen that has Fremantle, advertising firm Dentsu and toyco Jakks Pacific as its key stakeholders. And it is a prime example of tying together financing from different sources.

"It's about multiple partners bringing together different sources of revenue," Schwartz says. "Advertisers are becoming more involved, earlier, and changing the world of financing." And he brings up an interesting wrinkle that illustrates the fine balance that Loi at DHX says producers must maintain when they put together deals.

"If we get a sponsorship, great—if the broadcaster can live with it. If an advertiser comes in early, the broadcaster could turn around and say, 'Hey, those are my rights,' and pay us less because they think we have cut off some of their revenue," Loi says, describing a typical conflict that arises when combining partners with divergent interests. 

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Cool new shows

BY LANA CASTLEMAN

The Day my Butt went Psycho

Co-producers Nelvana (Canada), Scholastic Entertainment (US) and Studio Moshi (Australia)

Style 2D digital animation

Format 52 x 11 minutes

Budget Between US\$300,000 and US\$350,000 per half hour

Status In development

Delivery Fall 2013

6 to 11

Concept Based on the four-book series from Scholastic that's sold roughly 1.3 million copies, this comedy-driven show is built on one fantastical premise—what if your butt could talk to you? Well Zack's posterior, aptly named Deuce (just think about that for a minute), not only talks, but he also has eyes, arms, legs and a short fuse. And thanks to the use of classic squash-and-stretch animation, when Deuce "goes psycho" he literally bounces off walls and shoots up into the sky. "It's the incredibly true tale of a boy and his butt," says Nelvana VP of development and co-productions Irene Weibel, somewhat wryly, of the buddy tale.



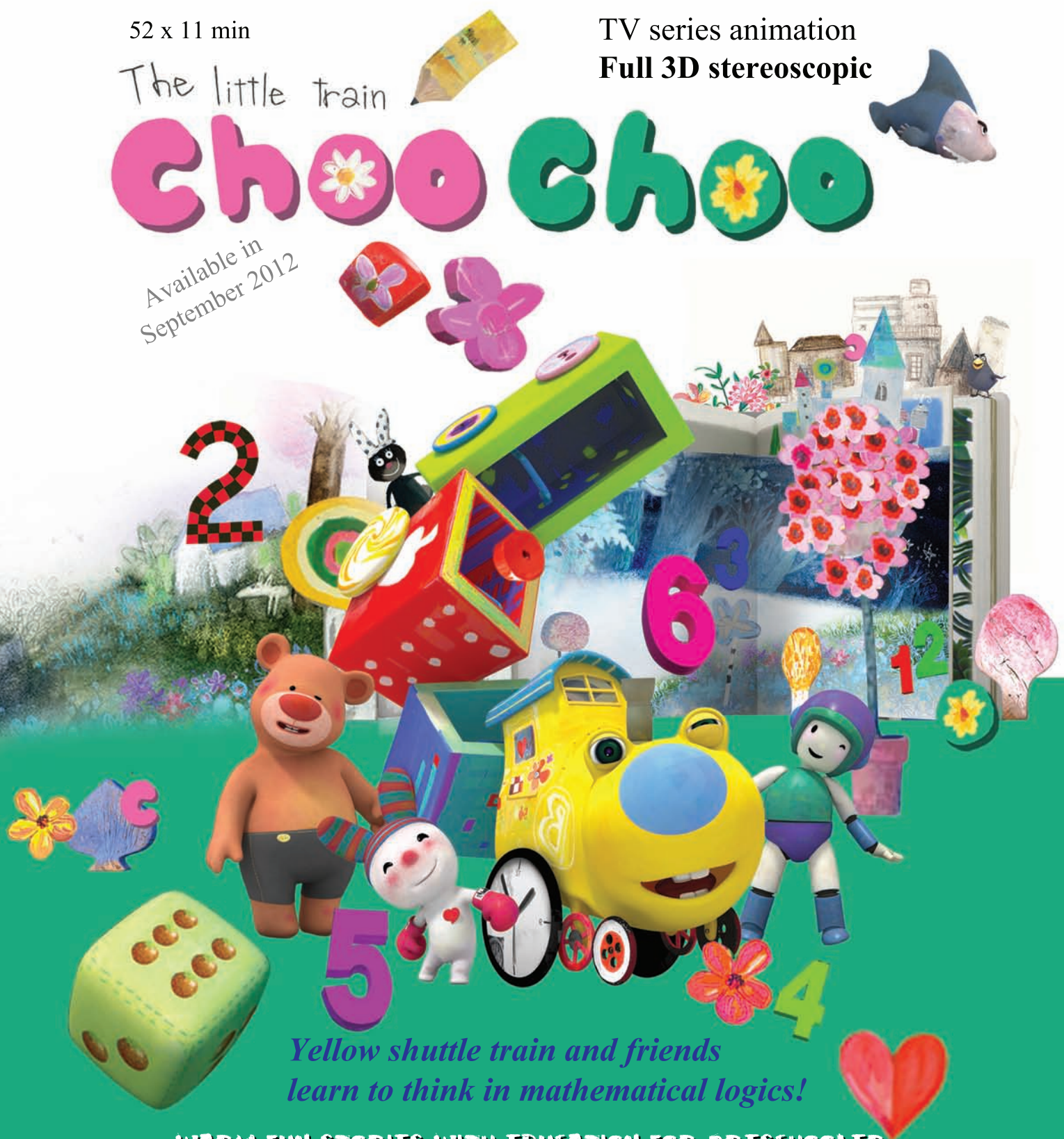
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3D ANIMATION



Port Little

Producer guru Studio (Canada)

Style Mixed animation

Format 52 x 11 minutes

Budget Roughly US\$300,000 per half hour

Status With a bible in-hand, guru is currently on the hunt for a triggering broadcast commission and may consider taking on a co-production partner for this one.

Delivery 2013

Concept Proving that good ideas are lurking just about anywhere, this new preschool concept grew from a group of illustrations created by guru's former intern Angela Kim. Intrigued by the look of Kim's characters, the company's president Frank Falcone, VP of development and acquisitions Mary Bredin and development exec Barbara Deignan were able to flesh out a story that revolves around the community of Port Little and its wee inhabitants, who are tasked in each episode with moving something with the help of their vehicles. In one ep, for example, central character Amelia (who pilots a plane) forms part of the team involved in relocating a beehive out of harm's way. The series' innovative style, given additional dimension with the introduction of fabric and texture to the design, also shines. "No fabric was hurt in the making of the bible," Bredin jokes. "It's a mix of various technologies with CGI and after-effects—there's something charming about having a vehicle show that's not just straightforward CGI."

Tree Fu Tom

Co-producers FremantleMedia Enterprises (FME) and CBeebies (both UK)

Style CGI animation

Format 26 x 22 minutes

Budget In line with the market-standard US\$350,000 per half hour

Status Greenlit by CBeebies for broadcast in 2012, it's in early production, with one script written and more to follow. FME is handling broadcast sales outside the UK and global L&M rights.

Delivery 2012

Concept Generated in-house at UK kidcaster CBeebies, *Tree Fu Tom* is meant to provide a bit of fantasy for the older-preschool crowd and infuses a movement curriculum with action, adventure and magic. With a US writer on-board courtesy of partner FME, each episode maintains a 22-minute story arc in which Tom enters a magical land through a huge oak tree that sits in his backyard. Once he ventures into the world, he encounters sprites, fairies and other fantastical creatures. Moreover, he can perform magic. It's only when the problems he encounters become too big that he turns to kids at home and asks for their help. Kid viewers are asked to perform a spell using Tai Chi-like gestures, coming to Tom's rescue and getting up off the couch and moving as well.

4 to 6





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Fuzzy Tales

Producer Brain Power Studios (Canada)

Style Mixed media

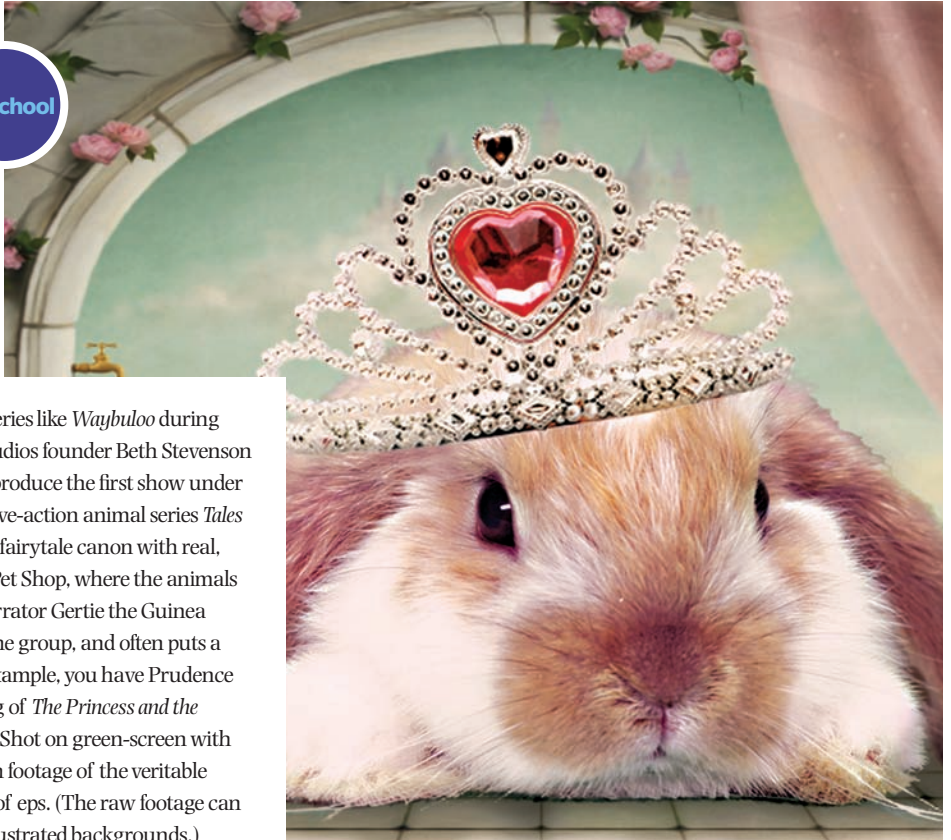
Format 40 x five minutes

Budget US\$200,000 per half hour

Status In production for commissioning broadcaster Kids' CBC in Canada, with distributor Bejuba! looking for international sales.

Delivery Fall 2011

preschool



Concept After working on elaborate preschool series like *Waybuloo* during her tenure at Decode/DHX Media, Brain Power Studios founder Beth Stevenson wanted to scale things back when it came time to produce the first show under her new shingle. With a nod to the classic British live-action animal series *Tales of the Riverbank*, Stevenson set about recasting the fairytale canon with real, adorable creatures. Each ep opens in Fuzzy Phil's Pet Shop, where the animals gather after closing time for their nightly story. Narrator Gertie the Guinea Pig reads a Fuzzy Tale, which draws its cast from the group, and often puts a modern-day twist on a well-known story. So, for example, you have Prudence the Pug taking the stage as Snow White or a telling of *The Princess and the Carrot* (peas are so not relevant to rabbits) unfolds. Shot on green-screen with an RED camera, it took just two days to get enough footage of the veritable menagerie of animals filmed to fuel the first order of eps. (The raw footage can be composited in almost endless variations onto illustrated backgrounds.)



girls
7 to 11

Mistral Ranch

Producer Télé Images Productions for Zodiak Kids (France)

Style 2D digital animation

Format 26 x half hours

Budget US\$8.19 million

Status With a commission from TF1 in-hand, Télé Images is looking to raise the remaining 20% of the budget.

Delivery 2012

Concept Télé Images CEO Philippe Alessandri says the prodco created the series in response to French broadcaster TF1's call for a show about horses. At its heart is Leah, a teen who builds a ranch to house rescued wild horses—and that's what differentiates *Mistral Ranch* from a number of equine-themed shows currently on the market, like *Saddle Club*. It takes place in a wild, natural environment and has just four main teen characters (two girls, two boys), with no clubs in sight. "It's an action-adventure with a comedic edge," he says, noting that the issues of being an ordinary teen are layered onto the stories. Also in the works is a virtual ranch, where kids will get to choose a horse and play mini-games to earn points and buy goods to care for their digital creature.

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Call for Chi-Chi

Co-producers Millimages (Paris), Pixtrend and Neon Pumpkin (both South Korea)

Style CGI animation

Format 52 x 11 minutes

Budget US\$7.4 million

Status Millimages should have a full pilot episode ready to go for MIPCOM, where it will start pitching broadcasters.

Delivery 2013

Concept What started out as a beautiful piece of animation, too fast in pace for a preschool audience, has now been molded by Millimages into a series that caters to the under-fives and encourages the development of emotional intelligence. At its center are twins Bella and Tommy, who like most siblings, disagree with each other quite a bit. One day, they find a book, *Call for Chi-Chi*, and upon opening it, summon the magical Chi-Chi into their living room. Playing mediator, she reverts to her world, which resembles a pop-up book, and relates an allegorical tale that helps resolve their disputes. 



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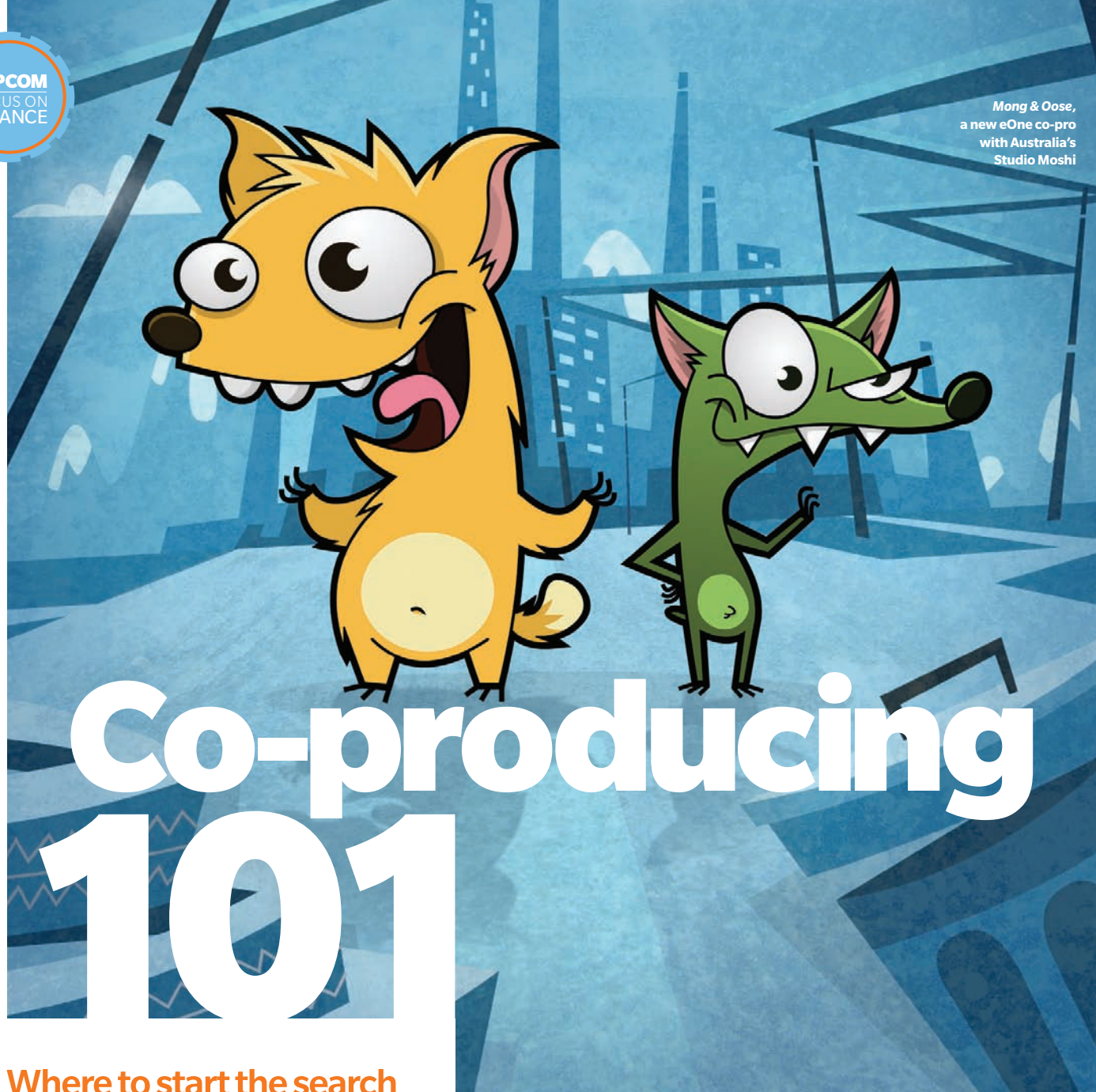
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**Where to start the search
for international partners
and series funding, not
to mention tips from
seasoned vets on how
to avoid common
co-pro conundrums**

BY KATE CALDER

It's

no wonder co-productions are often compared to marriage. Think about it. There's dating (MIPCOM), introducing that special someone to your family (applying for regional tax credits), followed by making a formal, legally binding commitment to each other (signing that lengthy co-production agreement). Let's not forget lovers'

quarrels (creative disagreements, overspends), making up (compromise) and finally ushering your miraculous first-born into the world—a.k.a. the completed 52 x 11-minute series.

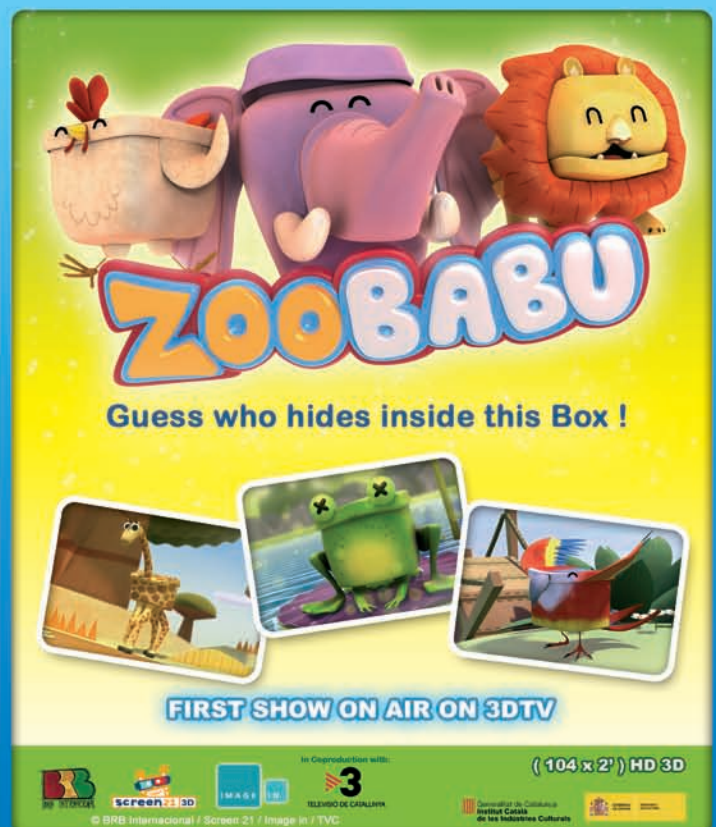
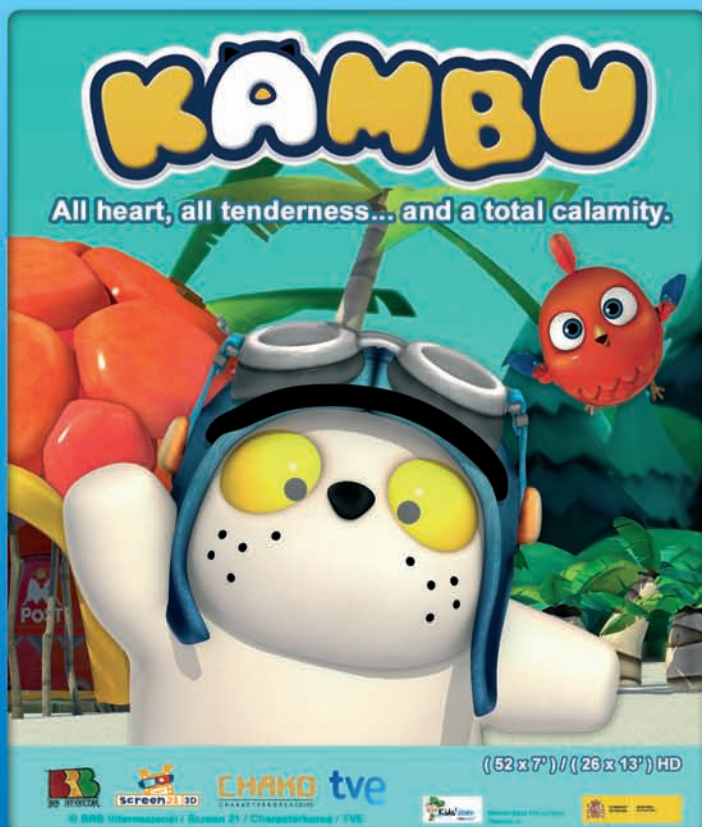
For an independent producer new to the scene, however, the reality of venturing into a co-production may well be as overwhelming as the prospect of marriage. The kids entertainment business is built on co-productions forged by a tight-knit web of producers and broadcasters savvy in the ways of maximizing regional funding, efficiently splitting production tasks and gaining access to worldwide markets. *Kidscreen* spoke to a number of them this summer to get some insight—including useful tips and cautionary tales—about how to start navigating the terrain of global co-productions.



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New preschool series
Mike the Knight from
Nelvana (Canada) and
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Canada

Canada has co-production agreements with more than 50 countries, and according to Telefilm, the organization that administers co-pro agreements on the government's behalf, the volume of Canadian productions has hovered around \$500 million annually for the past three years. **Tip:** Be sure to clearly define work split. Canadian tax breaks have specific requirements on creative talent quotas, and the funding landscape changes often.

Trade organizations

Telefilm Canada

www.telefilm.gc.ca
(microsite on co-productions:
www.telefilm.gc.ca/canada-usb)

Canadian Audio-Visual

Certification Office

www.pch.gc.ca/cavco

Funding

Canadian Media Fund

www.cmf-fmc.ca

Bell Broadcast and New Media Fund

www.bellfund.ca

Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund

www.cifvf.ca

Shaw Rocket Fund

www.rocketfund.ca

Quebecor Fund

www.fondsvideotron.com

France

France has more than 30 official co-production treaties, and at the heart of the French funding system is the CNC, which assists production through an initiative called COSIP. Getting CNC-approved tax breaks requires fulfilling a point system that keeps a lot of the creative work in France.

Trade organizations

Centre National de la Cinematographie

www.cnc.fr

Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiotvisuel

www.csa.fr

Commission Nationale de Film France

www.filmfrance.com

Funding

Ile-de-France Film Fund

[www.cine-regio.org/
members/ile-de-france/](http://www.cine-regio.org/members/ile-de-france/)

Tip: Angoulême and
Annecy are key regions for
production funding.

Territory appeal Simply put, it's becoming nearly impossible to produce a show without sharing financing and resources with partners. And most co-productions involve pairing up with a partner from a country covered by a treaty agreement, which enables the project to benefit from local incentives and tax credits. (See info charts highlighting some of the more popular co-pro territories throughout this article.) Tapping into these territory incentives, however, often requires getting a regional broadcaster onboard at the outset.

"If you know you're comfortable creating the storyboards and having the animation done somewhere else, find the countries that are good places to get that work done and find a broadcaster for your project," says Olivier Dumont, MD of eOne Family and owner of Paris-based prodco FrogBox. With more than 10 years under his belt, Dumont points out that each territory has different rules and fund disbursements. For example, he says, the funding is reliant on how much a broadcaster invests in a show in Canada, versus France, where the incentives are

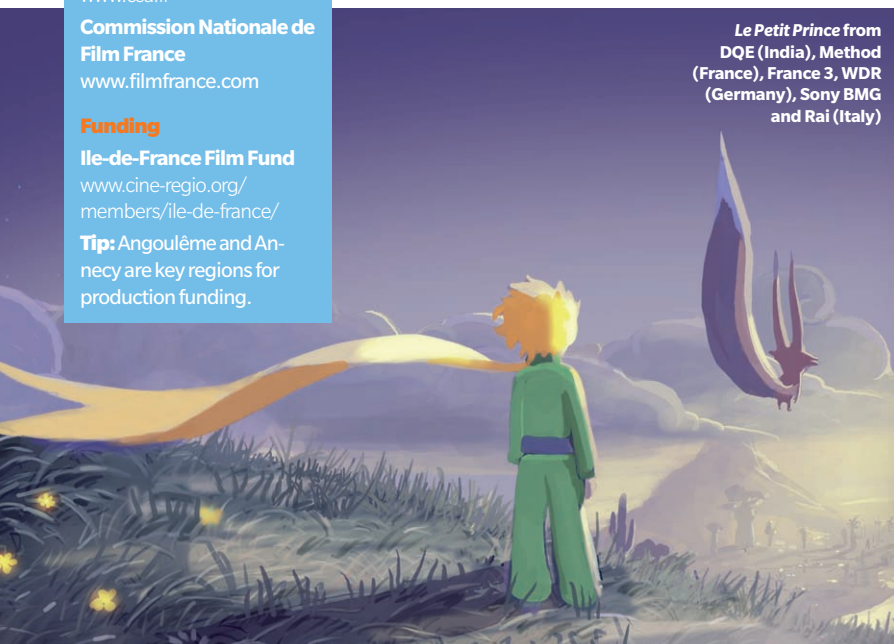
more fixed. "You select a production company that will be in charge of raising financing locally and discuss what the possibilities are," he says, adding that researching information on which countries have good co-pro agreements is key. Local partners will also have a keen sense of how much local broadcasters are looking to spend and the kinds of genres for which they're willing to pay more.

Creative cobbling When it comes down to putting together a co-pro, there are arguably an infinite number of ways to structure the deals both financially and logistically. When Billy MacQueen, MD of London-based studio Darrall MacQueen, began looking for partners for the studio's recent comedy series *Pet Squad*, he needed to find companies that understood the toon's mix of 1970s style with a fast-paced SpongeBob-esque stream of jokes and character gags.

First, the UK studio teamed up with Toronto, Canada-based March Entertainment, which had a number of like-minded 2D series in its portfolio, as well as a firm grip on regional tax breaks. MacQueen then looked to Malaysia for an animation partner. Malaysian multimedia development org, MDcC, which has a mandate to promote country's animation industry internationally, introduced him to one of its top-tier studios, Inspidea. The company immediately got the humor of the series and also had an impressive track record. "They had done their homework, and they knew they wanted to get a better feel for the international market and how to make international content," says MacQueen. He adds that the production and financing was pretty evenly split, with each partner contributing roughly US\$1.6 million apiece to the project.

In 2007, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil-based 2D Lab struck up a co-production deal with Toronto, Canada's Breakthrough Entertainment on *My Big Big Friend*, which just bowed last month on Canadian preschool net Treehouse and Discovery Familia in the US. A true 50/50 deal, the financing was split down the middle and took advantage of government incentives from both territories. (In terms of production, scripting and post-production were completed in Canada, and Brazil looked after the animation.)

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Australia

Australia has treaties or memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with 10 countries, which are administered by Screen Australia, formed in 2008 as a merger between the country's Film Finance Corporation, the Australian Film Commission and Film Australia. The four-year-old Australian Screen Production Incentive is a tax benefit package designed to encourage private investment in Australian-produced content.

Trade organizations

Screen Australia

www.screenaustralia.gov.au

Centre for Screen Business

www.csb.aftr.edu.au

Australian Film Institute

www.afi.org.au

Film and Television

Institute of Western

Australia

www.fti.asn.au

Screen Queensland

www.screenqueensland.com.au

Screen NSW

screen.nsw.gov.au

Funding

Australian Children's Television Foundation

www.actf.com.au

2D Lab partner and executive producer André Breitman says constructive feedback from Canadian broadcaster Treehouse was invaluable to the series' development, as Brazilian nets are not focused on creating content with an eye to making international sales. But since beefing up governmental animation incentives in 2008, Brazil has been a territory to watch for co-production opportunities. Besides continuing to add more territories to its treaty list, private equity firms from any industry are also given major tax credits for financing animated projects. So Brazil's producers often end up pitching screen concepts to the likes of mining and energy companies, which in turn bank-roll production. Breitman says the treaties allow Brazil to co-produce with multiple partners. "So we don't have a treaty with Italy, but we could carry 20% of the cost in Brazil, 20% from Canada and 60% from Italy," he explains.

For Jordan-based Rubicon Studios, which has offices in L.A. and the Philippines—none of which have co-production treaties—most deals are based on equity financing. The company scouts for IP with potential, and as executive director of development and production David Corbett explains, if the company can interest a distributor and generate some presales, it brings the rest of the financing to the table through its creative resources.

The company's latest kids series to net global sales, *Pink Panther and Pals* (26 x half hours) was a no-brainer, says Corbett. Rubicon produced the series with MGM Pictures. The Hollywood heavyweight brought a presale from Cartoon Network to the table. "We then raised the balance of the budget through our resources," adds Corbett.

It's true that most US indies don't have the backing of a multi-national like Rubicon. But besides leveraging a groundswell for your property through viral online channels,

Corbett recommends looking to other territories—namely Canada—to get North American projects off the ground.

More than 20 years in the business has also taught Corbett some important lessons. His first piece of advice is to watch your cash flow and bottom line on budgets. And he's made a habit of hiring consultants who understand local tax credit systems, which he describes as moving targets. Make sure you are eligible and approved for all available tax incentives before you get bank funding. "I've seen situations where percentages of tax credits have been denied and then you end up owing the bank," he says. Keeping on top of overages is also important. "If your partner is causing overages, you can have all the contracts in the world, but somebody has to have the money to finish and meet delivery." Finally, Corbett contends that you can't move forward solely on the word of a potential partner that says it has interest from a broadcaster or distributor in its territory. "They can be interested in a lot of things, but it's what they buy that counts," he notes. In short, do your homework. If you're told Paramount is on-board as a distributor, call Paramount. Everything should be completely transparent.

The big little guys Being an international entertainment and distribution company has its advantages for eOne and eOne Family. "We're in a good place for financing our shows in a variety of ways—we can set it up in Canada, and we can also co-produce with my production company in France," says Dumont. Series like *Peppa Pig* and *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom*, which were co-produced with London-based Astley Baker Davies, saw eOne acting strictly as a financing and distribution partner. Currently eOne is developing co-production *Mong & Oose* with Studio Moshi in Australia, which has the support of a local broadcaster that wasn't ready to be revealed at press time. Dumont says he's had initial interest as well from Canada and the UK, but the final deal keeps changing based on where eOne Family is fielding the most interest in terms of raising the funding. "We're finalizing the development work, and depending on where we get a bite from a broadcaster, it will determine where we set up the co-production."

Josh Scherba, SVP of distribution at DHX Media in Toronto, echoes Dumont's suggestion to focus on territories that have access to funding. He also advises avoiding going too far down the road with a broadcaster in the country in which you want to co-produce. When you get that initial interest from a network, he says, that's the time to talk to a production partner in that country and have it see the conversation through with the broadcaster. "We feel it's the most appropriate way to go forward," says Scherba. At DHX, he's witnessed the benefits of small independent producers partnering with a company that has built-in distribution. "It makes sense for one of the rights owners to handle distribution, rather than getting a co-partner and then layering on a distribution partner, because from a deal standpoint, it's just that much more complicated to pull together."

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*Fishtronaut from
TV Pinguim (Brazil)
and Breakthrough
Entertainment (Canada)*

Brazil

Brazil's government supports its film and TV industry through Ancine, a regional film agency that processes all submissions for co-production financing. And almost 90% of independent producers benefit from a newly established tax incentive program initiated by the Brazilian TV Producers Association that reduces taxes for investors equivalent to the amount of cash put towards a production.

Trade organizations

Brazilian TV Producers

www.braziliantvproducers.com

Ancine

www.ancine.gov.br

Brazilian Association for

Cinema Animation

www.abca.org.br

Funding

Apex-Brasil (Brazilian trade and investment promotion agency)

www.apexbrasil.com.br

Brazilian National Social Development Bank (BNDES)

www.bndes.gov.br

Korea

Korea currently has one co-pro treaty with Canada, but is in negotiations with several other countries, including Australia. Government trade org KOCCA, established in 2009 to grow Korea's content industry, funds marketing efforts such as sending producers to markets, and is expanding its financial support to boost investment and loans for animated projects. Pubcasters KBS and EBS also finance animation and invest as distributors.

Trade organizations

KOCCA

www.kocca.kr

Korean Film Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

www.mct.go.kr/english/index.jsp

And from DHX's point of view, distribution capabilities also influence the choice of companies with which it works. For example, Scherba says DHX has struggled to work with French partners because so many of them have distribution arms, which would ultimately pit the partners against each other for sales rights. "It's important to look at the size and strength of the two companies and figure out right from the outset if a deal makes sense," he says. However, Scherba stresses that these days it's an asset to be flexible. For example, preschool series *Waybuloo* was a UK-based co-production with Zodiak, for which that company retains worldwide rights. For its part, DHX oversaw the animation work from Toronto and got Canadian net Treehouse on-board as a broadcast partner.

Don't forget the broadcaster Flexibility is a concept broadcasters are also having to embrace right now. Even heavy-weight Cartoon Network has seen a lot of change in how it approaches deals over the past few years, according to Adina Pitt, VP of content acquisitions and co-productions at


Cartoon Network US. Whereas producers used to be able to get shows financed with a few presales and then approach CN for US placement, Pitt says the norm now requires the network to get involved with projects at their earliest stage, whether it's a straightforward acquisition or a co-production deal.

"It enables us to get really great shows, lock into those partnerships early on, and still not incur the costs that it would require if we wholly owned those properties or made them in-house," says Pitt. Also a first for the net, she says, is its foray into partnering with broadcasters all over the world that have the ability to bring local government incentives to the table and are eager to tap into the channel's comic sensibility and creative resources.

Pitt says CN partners with its sister networks in more than 100 countries around the globe as often as it can, but is open to negotiating for access to a show. For example, she says a co-production deal with TF1 might mean that CN would wait a little longer to air the show after it premiered on the French terrestrial channel.

And besides dealing with worldwide broadcasters, Pitt is known for her attention to working with indies. "We're in a position where we can help an independent producer get something off the ground—that's a powerful position and one that we don't take lightly," she says. For her part, she knows what the needs of the market are at any given moment and tracks genres of interest all year long. Sales markets like MIPCOM are less transactional for Pitt and more a means of meeting and catching up with producers and managing relationships.

As for producers looking to get that first spark of interest from a broadcaster that will jump-start a co-production deal, Pitt suggests identifying some of the people at nets you'd like to be working with and requesting informational meetings. Show them what you're doing, ask for their feedback and their ideas on what companies to approach. Also, ask what you can do to package your project into something that's ready to come to the network.

"The last piece of advice I would give to producers is be prepared to listen," she says. "The hardest part is hearing what you don't want to hear." 



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FALL TV FACE OFF

BY AMANDA BURGESS

US Cartoon Network finds success with new animated comedies while Disney XD delivers on live-action laughs

UK CBeebies searches out girl-centric toons and Cartoonito readies pan-Euro expansion

France Gulli test-drives a new original live-action format while France Télévisions floats new blocks on France 4 and France 0

Canada Treehouse stays atop the preschool heap as Disney Junior builds buzz



Cartoon Network

CN builds on ratings success with boys as it looks ahead to 20th anniversary

The net: Cartoon Network (CartoonNetwork.com), currently seen in more than 99 million US homes and 168 countries around the world, is Turner Broadcasting's ad-supported cable service now available in HD, offering original, acquired and classic entertainment for youth and families. Nightly from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. (ET, PT), CN shares its channel space with Adult Swim, a late-night destination showcasing original and acquired animated and live-action comedy programming for young adults 18 to 34.

The target audience: Kids and families.

Current hits: "We really have come into our own as the new voice of comedy for this generation of kids," says Stuart Snyder, president and COO of CN, who notes that in early September, the net had four shows in the top 30, not only with boys, but also kids six to 11 overall. Two of those shows, *Adventure Time* and *Gumball*, continue to be top performers. *Adventure Time* has become the number-one show in its timeslot in all kids and boys demos, with double-digit gains over last year for its current season. *Gumball* also ranks number-one in its timeslot with kids two to 11, kids six to 11 and all boys.

The challenge: To sustain the momentum on the performance of key promotables and the network overall, which saw double-digit ratings growth in key demos (Q2 and Q3 2011).

The strategy: As a key contributor to the network's success, Snyder will focus on building the *Adventure Time* brand off-air, with a toy range launched at Toys 'R' Us in September. And with *Gumball*, the first show out of CN's development studio in Europe, the focus is on-air. The brand is being rolled out across the channel's global portfolio, starting with the UK in September.

In keeping with the net's boys action mandate, it's launching a new one-hour block in 2012 called DC Nation that will initially house episodes of *Green Lantern: The Animated Series* and *Young Justice*. "Our aspiration is to make that hour all things DC Entertainment—shows, shorts, information on what's happening in the DC universe," says Snyder. The block will be supported on-air with bumps and interstitials. Original interstitial content is also being created, as well as online games and content.

October 2012 also marks the network's 20th anniversary, so plans are underway to make it a celebration for viewers, creators, employees and partners alike. We can expect CN to mine its archives for programming stunts, a digital celebration on the net's website and the anniversary theme to be incorporated into up-front messaging next year.

Fall hopefuls: In Q4, CN is launching live-action scripted comedy *Level Up* with a movie ahead of the show's early 2012 premiere. The series centers around four high school students who

unwittingly open a portal from a video game, causing its characters to start leaking into the real world. And based on the book by Cressida Cowell and the blockbuster DreamWorks animated film, half-hour series *How to Train Your Dragon* follows the misadventures of young viking Hiccup, who defies tradition when he befriends a dragon he calls Toothless.

Marketing mix: Since *How to Train Your Dragon* is a known franchise with a built-in fan base, efforts are focusing on letting fans know the new series is coming to CN. With *Level Up*, the net is highlighting its known talent. While media plans were still in development at press time, Brenda Freeman, CN chief marketing officer, says that digital is a safe bet. "We want to be where kids are," she says. "Digital is the most powerful medium in terms of having long reach with our audience, in addition to the usual hardworking suspects like TV and radio." She points to the net's Facebook page, which boasts 4.6 million fans, as an example of a platform CN leverages for key promos.

What's next: "It's safe to say that comedy and action are our great strengths, as evidenced by our ratings," says Snyder. But whether that's animated or live-action, scripted or unscripted, it doesn't matter as much as the show does. "We really look for partners to present great content and we make decisions on a best-show-wins scenario," he adds.



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XD newcomer *Kickin' It* smashed summer ratings records and is a tentpole series this fall

Disney XD

Boy-targeted XD mixes channel faves and online games to drive eyeballs

The net: A basic cable channel and multi-platform brand that spans TV, online, mobile and VOD platforms, Disney XD houses a mix of live-action and animated programming that includes series, movies and shorts. In the US, Disney XD is seen on a 24-hour, advertiser-supported network that reaches more than 78 million households via its basic cable and satellite affiliates. Year-to-year, Disney XD has posted 28 consecutive months of total day ratings increases among boys six to 14 and boys six to 11.

The target audience: Kids ages six to 14, hyper-targeting boys and their quest for discovery, accomplishment, sports, adventure and humor.

Current hit: New live-action comedy *Kickin' It* has karate-chopped the competition and propelled the network to its best summer ever to rank as Disney XD's number-one original series today and number-one telecast ever in key demos. "It's a great combination of humor, action and characters—it's struck a huge chord with the Disney XD audience," says David Levine, VP of programming and GM of Disney XD Worldwide. "It has a fantastic group of actors who are delivering great comedy along with doses of martial arts action."

The challenge: To continue to build on a record-breaking summer season. Powered by key

series *Kickin' It* and *Pair of Kings*, as well as the debut of *Phineas and Ferb the Movie: Across the 2nd Dimension*, Disney XD recorded its best three months and best 10 weeks in network history in total day with kids six to 14, kids six to 11, tweens nine to 14 and boys nine to 14.

The strategy: "We'll continue to build by broadening out the content that we have on the platform," says Levine. This season, the strategy involves supporting new hits like *Kickin' It*, driving eyeballs between TV and online, and taking calculated risks with untried genres.

To pave the way for new episodes of *Kickin' It* this month, Disney XD launched a promo and stunt in September called "Game On: Kickin' It versus Pair of Kings," in which the casts of both shows compete in challenges inspired by the network's suite of popular online games. For example, in the online version of *Dojo Dodge*, players dodge projectiles thrown at them. In the real-life competition, opponents try to avoid getting hit by water balloons.

Established hits and online gaming also feature prominently in the net's plans for a new afternoon block that debuted on September 12. Disney XD 120 contains two hours of the network's most popular shows, like *Kickin' It*, *Pair of Kings* and *Zeke and Luther*. Each week, a different online game is featured in shout-outs

and game tips on the linear channel, encouraging kids to go online and take part in a game challenge. On Fridays, players can see their names and scores on TV.

Finally, the channel is leveraging talent to launch a kids version of adult competition show *Fort Boyard* that takes place in a 19th Century Napoleonic sea fort. The co-pro with Zodiak has *Pair of Kings* star Geno Segers acting as host.

Fall hopefuls: Beyond new eps of *Kickin' It* and the premiere of *Fort Boyard*, 2012 will see the launch of a new live-action Disney XD original series called *Lab Rats*, which is about a teen named Leo who discovers he has superhuman step-siblings with bionic powers living in the basement of his new home. "With this show, we have a diverse cast, including Tyrell Jackson Williams from *Everybody Hates Chris*," says Levine. "It's a fun mix of interpersonal relationships, the sibling dynamic and, well, bionic superpowers."

Marketing mix: New fall and 2012 premieres will be promoted primarily on-air and cross-platform, including Disney Channel.

What's next: Levine is on the hunt for animated comedies targeting boys—something that complements Disney XD smash hit *Phineas and Ferb*.



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CBeebies controller Kay Benbow picked up *Tilly and Friends* because of its strong, and fun, girl lead

CBeebies

The preschool diginet targets girls, and gets its first live audience this fall

The net: With a remit to encourage learning through play, diginet CBeebies offers a mix of entertainment and educational programming, with a strong emphasis on content from British producers. It also airs preschool programming on BBC One and BBC Two.

The target audience: Kids ages six and under.

Current hit: Since it premiered last fall, girl-skewing toon *Everything's Rosie* has skyrocketed to the top of the preschool ratings heap, reaching 496,100 children in October 2010, a scant month after its debut. The show continues to be a strong performer for the channel, and it convinced CBeebies controller Kay Benbow to commission more girl-targeted programming. "I want to see more girl leads in the animation world," she says, pointing to the fall debuts of *Tilly and Friends* and *Abney and Teal* as two series that can support *Everything's Rosie*.

The challenge: "We've had a phenomenally successful summer, with reach as high as 47%," says Benbow. "The challenge is to keep building on that this fall, keeping the channel fresh across the presentation set."

The strategy: "This season, it's about making sure that older kids can find content that works for them. We plan blocks around when

our audience is available," says Benbow. "What we've done on weekends and at lunchtime is look at content from a co-viewing perspective—shows that appeal to parents and encourage kids to get out and about."

New live-action series and in-house commission *Justin's House* (22 x 25 minutes) is one show that Benbow is banking on becoming a co-viewing event for families. The first CBeebies show recorded in the Beeb's new home at MediaCity, *Justin's House* stars BAFTA winning presenter Justin Fletcher (*Something Special*) as he entertains a theater audience of kids ages three to six with an interactive mix of singing, dancing and comedy.

As the channel's first live-audience show, Benbow's scheduling strategy for *Justin's House* will be something of a departure from the preschool norm. "We want to make it appointment viewing, so we'll be scheduling it differently. A lot of our shows on CBeebies are stripped every day, but we won't be doing that with *Justin's House*."

Since the holidays tend to be big co-viewing periods, Benbow is putting a strong emphasis on the season again this year. "We go big at Christmas and make CBeebies a destination, getting our presenters together for a pantomime—a very British thing," she says. Last year's pantomime was number-one on the channel's iPlayer, and for holiday 2011, Benbow will do another, along with a *Justin's House* special, holiday episodes of CBeebies favorites and an online advent calendar.

Fall hopefuls: While the big fall focus is on in-house commission *Justin's House*, Benbow asserts that girl leads are quite important on the animation front, and is betting on Ragdoll's *The Adventures of Abney and Teal* and *Tilly and Friends* (Walker Books/Jam Media). *Abney and Teal*, which mixes CGI with real illustrations and puppets, follows six friends who live on an island in a lake in the middle of a city. *Tilly and Friends*, meanwhile, is based on a series of children's books about a little girl and her six animal pals who all live together in a cozy yellow house.

Marketing mix: *Justin's House* is CBeebies' main show to promote this season. Leveraging the popularity of presenter Justin Fletcher, who Benbow says is regularly "mobbed on the street," CBeebies will market the show via cross-promotions on other BBC platforms and outdoor advertising.

What's next: Benbow is on the hunt for live action—both in factual programming and narrative dramas like *Grandpa in My Pocket*. "Factual entertainment, drama and sitcoms appeal to the older end of our target—the younger end is well served at the moment," she says. "Every year, you have to look at your schedule and try to achieve a balance across your commissioning slate."

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Cartoonito

Turner's kidnet leverages revamped classics to broaden its reach beyond the UK

The net: Cartoonito is a preschool channel that launched as a programming block on Cartoon Network Too in September 2006, extending to a full channel in May 2007. A place where preschool children can explore their world in a fun and imaginative way, Cartoonito airs a mix of established preschool shows like *Barney* and *Hi-5*, as well as newer shows like *Pororo* and *Blanche*. Exclusive to the block is the make-believe world of the Cartoonitos, six animated characters who introduce the shows both in English and French. Cartoonito is the first and only kids channel in the UK to facilitate soft learning of a second language in interstitials. It airs daily from 6 a.m. until 7 p.m., and includes day-part programming designed to reflect the lives of preschoolers and their parents.

The target audience: Preschoolers.

Current hit: Updated British classic *Fireman Sam* (HIT Entertainment) has been a consistent top performer on Cartoonito since its UK launch. Indeed, for the week ending August 28, *Fireman Sam* episodes occupied five of the weekly top-10 programs on Cartoonito, according to BARB data. "It's well-loved and respected by parents," says Turner EMEA chief content officer Michael Carrington. "It's helping us to grow the channel." Cartoonito has already ordered 26 x 10-minute episodes of the show's eighth season, due to be delivered in spring 2012.

The challenge: Replicating the fledgling network's UK-based success throughout Europe. On September 5, Cartoonito expanded from UK-only broadcast to become available in 125 million homes across EMEA. In the UK, Cartoonito has doubled its ratings in the past year, making it the third-most-watched pay-TV preschool channel in the territory (BARB, January to July 2011, kids ages four to nine).

The strategy: "What we try to do differently from our friends at other preschool channels is that we're quirky—we look for interesting characters and shows that have strong visual styles," says Carrington.

Case in point is the CGI remake of classic Aussie preschool series *Bananas in Pyjamas* from Endemol. "It's bright, colorful and takes all the best of the original—the quirky, the funny, the crazy—and wraps it in a new 3D package," says Carrington. The revamped series features new stories and songs from PJ-wearing bananas B1 and B2, their friends the Teddies, and an ever-mischievous rat in the magical world of Cuddletown. The show launched a bit early in the UK (July 25) so it could gain an audience before being rolled out on Cartoonito across EMEA in September. Ratings for the week starting August 8, 2011 ranked *Bananas in Pyjamas* as the most-watched show on Cartoonito by kids ages four to nine.

A key fall premiere for the channel is CGI-animated series *Jelly Jamm*, a co-pro from Vodka Capital, 737 Shaker and RTVE. "It's quite fast-paced for a preschool show, so it's aspirational for five-year-olds," says Carrington of the musical comedy, which launched on September 5.

Marketing mix: Fall premieres will be promoted via on-air trailers, with the added benefit of cross-channel promotion on Boomerang and Cartoon Network.

What's next: With the UK channel going from strength to strength, Carrington's focus is on the EMEA rollout. Cartoonito launched as a block on Boomerang channels across 14 countries and on Cartoon Network in the Middle East and Turkey on September 5. The block is a clearly signposted place where preschoolers and parents can enjoy flagship programming and local content, mirroring the UK model that has enjoyed success with locally produced content like *Cartoonito Karaoke*. "Our scheduling of the Cartoonito blocks will vary, but generally it will air mornings and afternoons when older kids are in school," says Carrington. Also making the leap to Cartoonito across EMEA will be the mascot Cartoonitos. In each market, Cartoonito will be promoted via ads in parenting magazines and papers, with cross-promotion on Turner channels like Boomerang and Cartoon Network.

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France Télévisions

Terrestrial kidcaster skews launches to holiday, focuses on blocks

The net: Pubcaster France Télévisions offers more than 4,000 hours of animation on France 3, France 4, France 5 and France O, targeting preschoolers, kids and their families. Ludo is France 3's children's brand, aimed at kids six to 12 and families with hit shows like *Garfield*, *Wakfu* and *The Owl*. Ludo is the exclusive terrestrial home of Warner Bros. animation content in France. Zouzous, France 5's preschool brand, targets kids three to six and their caregivers with a mix of international preschool hits like *Dinosaur Train* and *Team Umizoomi*, and French original series like *Lulu Zipadoo*. Multiplatform content for the brands includes webtv's (Ludo webtv and Zouzous webtv), SVOD and apps around key franchises. France Télévisions invests annually in the co-production of three animated movies with France 3 Cinéma. Children's programming on France Télévisions reaches between 200,000 and 1.5 million viewers.

The target audience: Preschoolers (Zouzous), kids six to 12 (Ludo), young adults and families.

Current hits: *Garfield* (Mediatoon) delivers strong numbers for Ludo's kids and family targets on France 3 in its second season, attracting more than 600,000 viewers over the summer. With a third season slated for February 2012, Julien Borde, head of children's and youth at France Télévisions, says the show "works because it's very consistent with the Jim Davis universe, and since it offers a wide variety of stories, it's easy to repeat." *Le Petit Prince* (Method Animation), which

premiered during the holiday season last year, has achieved strong results in primetime with a 10% market share and more than one million viewers. "It was a highly challenging slot—competing with Disney on M6—and we have managed to attract very different targets thanks to a strong promotional plan," says Borde.

The challenge: To continue to capture kid eyeballs in all of its target demos, across all brands and platforms.

The strategy: The strategy this season involves a holiday launch for key titles and new blocks across the broadcaster's family of channels. "Holidays are used to launch new shows on all of our channels because we have longer slots available on our generalist channels during those periods, and kids are, of course, more available and focused on what we can provide them," says Borde, who will launch new series *Jungle Report* (France 3) and *Mouk* (France 5) during the holiday period.

The pubcaster will also debut three new programming blocks this season. France 4 has a new two-hour morning block dedicated to action-adventure that features new episodes of *Iron Man* and *Green Lantern* and new musical comedy *Garage Club*. France 4 will launch a primetime weekend block (8 p.m. on Saturdays) dedicated to animation for young adults, starting with *Mr. Bébé* from Xilam and the French premiere of Warner Bros.' sketch comedy *MAD*. The block will soon become home to new original animated content

from French producers. Finally, a new two-hour after-school block hits France O this fall, featuring shows like *Sally Bollywood*, *Famous Five* and live-action tween series *Flight 29 Down*, with new series *H2O* and *Street Football* set to debut later in the season.

Fall hopefuls: Launching as a short-form series in October to promote the premiere of its one-hour holiday special, *Jungle Report* (Tat Production, 26 x 1.5 minutes and one x 52 minutes) is an original series produced in France. It's a madcap comedy that chronicles the adventures of a band of jungle animals on an epic journey to the Antarctic ice floe. "We believe this unique comedy will attract both kids and parents and be a hit on France 3," says Borde. "I like the *Timon and Pumbaa* meets *Ice Age* look-and-feel of the show." On the preschool front, France 5 welcomes *Mouk* (Millimages, 52 x 10 minutes) this holiday season.

Marketing mix: Both holiday premieres will be supported by robust on-air promotional campaigns and interstitials across all platforms.

What's next: Borde says he's on the hunt for more young adult content—particularly animation for the new tween toon block on France 4—and wants to see more hybrid formats that mix animation and live action. On the preschool front, he's after original concepts from both French and international producers that are "more than a *Dora* or *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* copycat."

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France's top kids DTT net innovates this fall with new format *A Chef at My Door*

Gulli

Lagardère's flagship kids channel goes animal-crazy, plans offline brand extensions

The net: Created in 2005, Gulli is the youth and family channel on free DTT offering early learning and discovery programs. The channel is committed to offering non-violent programming to build trust with parents. It's the leading French national channel with kids ages four to 10 in the daytime with an 18.4 % market share (7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Médiamétrie, June 2011).

The target audience: Children ages three to 14 and parents.

Current hits: Karine Leyzin, GM of youth and women's channels at Gulli owner Lagardère Active, says cartoons and shows that feature animals—particularly pets—are strong performers on the channel, adding that she is currently looking for more. She points to Millimages' *Cornel & Bernie* as a prime example. "A show about a genius dog who talks? This provides both humor and a very special and unique animal character," she says.

The challenge: To continue to evolve and build Gulli into the top global entertainment brand in France, promoting the values of friendship, tolerance, respect for others and for the environment.

The strategy: Gulli's schedule is a mix of French co-pros and international acquisitions, and this season, the focus will be the same. Leyzin says she budgets for commissioning three to four series in a year. "We choose animation and action-adventure series with brand diversification opportunities, and series that are family-oriented for access and primetime scheduling," she says. She anticipates that new game-show format *A Chef at My Door*—a co-pro with J2F Production—will provide co-viewing opportunities.

In Gulli's programming year, launches are slated for September, January and around each of the major holidays. In keeping with her focus on comedy, Leyzin plans to launch a new programming block before the end of the year called Badly Funny, which she will fill with irreverent animated series for the whole family.

Since Gulli is a multiplatform brand—encompassing tiji.fr and canalj.fr, mobile, tablet and connected TV applications, iTunes downloads, audio, magazines, toys and events—Leyzin is also focused on extending the brand beyond on-air and online. Before the end of 2011, in a Parisian suburb, Gulli will launch its first indoor leisure park for families. The Gulli Park will be a fully equipped playground

with an entrance fee that offers access to numerous activities, themed areas like the "party village" and an "energy space" with climbing walls and tubular structures, and a wi-fi lounge for parents.

Fall hopefuls: In keeping with the "animals play well" theme, Leyzin launched Cyber Group's *Fish & Chips* in September—a comedy-adventure series about a fish who wants to be human and a cat who loves fish. January will ring in new original format *A Chef at My Door*, a cooking-themed game show for the whole family. Two families learn to cook healthy meals at home with one chef each to help them out, and the results are judged by their neighbors. "The aim is to help kids and parents understand the need to eat well with balanced recipes that can be prepared and shared together," says Leyzin.

Marketing mix: Fall debuts will be promoted via a mix of print, radio and television advertising, as well as a dedicated page on the Gulli website, which garners 800,000 hits per month.

What's next: Leyzin is looking for made-for-TV movies, live action, animation and entertainment shows for kids six to 14 and families.

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Nick Jr.'s *Bubble Guppies* is set to swim on Treehouse

Treehouse

Canada's top preschool net stays the course

The net: Corus Entertainment-owned specialty network Treehouse, seen in 7.5 million homes across Canada. The channel delivers a strong balance of educational, values-rich and entertaining preschool programming, with a mix of Canadian original series and international acquisitions. Parents and kids can also access Treehouse online at www.TreehouseTV.com (which reaches more than 500,000 moms per month), and through On Demand and On Mobile TV.

The target audience: Preschoolers and their parents.

Current hits: "What's been working for us really well are our Nickelodeon properties," says Ted Ellis, VP of kids and family programming at Corus Entertainment. "*Dora the Explorer* is still a massive hit, along with *Max & Ruby* and *The Backyardigans* (both co-produced with Nelvana). Music-based series like *The Backyardigans* and *The Fresh Beat Band* also continue to perform well on Treehouse."

The challenge: To compete with upstart Disney Junior and maintain the net's position as the preschool powerhouse in the Canadian market. "Treehouse is a stalwart brand and we can't let it fall behind," says Ellis. "We consider the competitive environment with Disney, and know that we can't rest on our laurels being number-one in the market for so long."

The strategy: Since Ellis moved to the kids and family portfolio from within Corus a little more than a year ago, the idea has been to weed and feed. "We took a look at the existing schedule to narrow it down, weeding out underperformers and doubling-down on performers. We're also working on a better programming flow."

Ellis says he knows how important it is for parents to know that they can find the shows their preschoolers love in the same timeslots day after day. That's why he decided to launch all of the network's fall promotables in September and keep them in the same spots until mid-season, introducing nothing new until early 2012. "We want to plant these things and leave them there so audiences can find them." Fall debuts include *Mike the Knight* (HIT/Nelvana), *My Big Big Friend* (Breakthrough/2D Lab) and Nick series *Bubble Guppies*.

Fall hopefuls: September 5 saw the premieres of *Bubble Guppies* (Mondays at 6 p.m.) and *My Big Big Friend* (Mondays at 6:30 p.m.). *Bubble Guppies*, set in a vibrant underwater world, follows the educational adventures of six pals as they discover the world around them, and it features a soundtrack of catchy pop tunes. *My Big Big Friend*, meanwhile, centers on three little friends as they face some big challenges, like not being able to reach the light switch at night. They are aided in their misadventures by

some imaginary animal friends who are tall, strong and big enough to help them out. *Mike the Knight* (Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.) swashbuckled its way onto Treehouse's schedule on September 8. The series is set in the medieval land of Glendragon, home to boy hero (and prince) Mike, who is determined to become a great and noble knight.

Marketing mix: "We're in a fortunate position that the Treehouse brand is so established that we don't need to do a lot of heavy marketing," says Ellis. The network focuses on contra deals with other Corus-owned networks for cross-promotion and outdoor advertising, with an emphasis on public transit. The fall slate will get that same treatment.

What's next: Ellis is looking for programming that will work well within the network's schedule as he builds and reinforces the current strategy. "Shows that are a radical departure—even if we love them—are hard to make work," he says. "Producers have to think like schedulers. We ask them, 'Where do you see this playing?' It lets us know if they've done their homework." So what works on Treehouse? According to Ellis, the concepts that jump out at him, from among the thousands he sees at markets, are those with high concepts, strong story arcs and characters at the center of the story.

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Disney Junior

The rebranded net toddles into fall after taking its first steps this past spring

The net: Disney Junior is a commercial-free channel available in French and English to subscribers across Canada, with a programming focus on imaginative storytelling. Presenting exclusive, first-run programs from the Disney mothership and original Canadian series, Disney Junior is also available through Disney Junior On-Demand and Disney Junior OnLine.

The target audience: Preschoolers.

Current hits: Canadian original series *Stella and Sam*, based on the book series by Marie-Louise Gay, has rated well for the fledgling network and has also drawn critical acclaim. The series was declared the best program for children two and up at the Banff World Television Festival and was the Grand Prize Winner at Canada's Youth Media Alliance awards. And one of the channel's other top performers has been Disney original *Jake and the Never Land Pirates*. "It's been key to our rebrand, and it's already number-one on the network and in the top five for kids two to five among all networks," says Disney Junior's director of original programming, Michael Goldsmith.

The challenge: To continue to build the network formerly known as Playhouse Disney that rebranded in May. "The rebranding has definitely contributed to our success—the whole network has seen growth," says Goldsmith.

The strategy: "The brand is so new that we are

really just focused on spreading the word about the channel," says Goldsmith. New series will roll out through the season to make for a mix of old and new.

In that vein, there will be a new season of *Stella and Sam*, led by repeats of its previous hit season. Goldsmith says that as a preschool channel, Disney Junior likes to repeat programming as much as possible, which allows for creating stunts around new episodes. Repeats of complementary series will also be lead-ins for new fall entrants like *Minnie's Bow-Toons* and *Pixie Hollow Games*, both from Disney.

Fall hopefuls: Slated for November is *Minnie's Bow-Toons*, a short-form series that chronicles the comedic happenings at Minnie Mouse's Bow-Tique Hotel. The show is an expansion of the world of the *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse*, with a skew to girls. It will be scheduled across the Disney Junior broadcast day.

Late fall will also see the premiere of a new animated special produced by John Lasseter called *Pixie Hollow Games*. The one-off program is based on the Disney Fairies franchise and features the voice talents of established Disney Channel stars like Brenda Song (*The Suite Life on Deck*). It's too early to know how *Pixie Hollow Games* will roll out, but as Disney Junior has access to other pieces of programming featuring Tinker Bell, it's likely the channel will lead up to the launch with weekend-morning stunts featuring the famous fairy and her pals.

Marketing mix: Fall premieres will be promoted via the usual suspects—on-air trailers and retail contests and promotions. But the net's also been busy leveraging the power of social media. "We work with Mom Central to engage 10 mommy bloggers who are part of its network and provide it with information about new programming to inform sponsored posts," says Goldsmith. The channel ambassadors also help to promote and drive consumers to network promotions, as with this past summer's Toyota contest. Disney's mommy bloggers were given an opportunity to test-drive the Toyota Sienna and blog about their experiences with the new minivan. Meanwhile, viewers and their kids could visit DisneyJunior.ca to customize a Sienna using creative elements from their favorite Disney Junior shows. They then watched the channel to see if their customized vehicles rolled across the screen during popular shows and had a chance to win the grand prize—a 2012 model of the vehicle.

What's next: "What separates Disney Junior in Canada is our commitment to creating new content across all platforms—online games, for instance, bolster what we do on-air," says Goldsmith. That's why the Disney Junior website doesn't feature the same games all the time. Look for new games from established favorites and new fall entrants to hit the site throughout the season and into 2012.

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Stepping up

BY AMANDA BURGESS

In the three years since the demise of Woolworths, a.k.a. Woolies, UK-based licensors and licensees stand divided on whether or not any retailer has actually managed to capture the 20% share of the overall market that the former retail giant commanded, let alone its expected incumbent Argos. Part of that is due to a rather grim overall outlook for British retail—characterized by low footfall and declining sales as a result of higher inflation, job losses and low wage growth. A recent survey from UK-based financial information services firm Markit reveals that 40% of British households saw their income fall between July and August—at a faster rate than at the height of the recession in 2009.

“Argos was reasonably successful in grabbing a piece of the market, but the main beneficiaries of Woolies’ exit were the grocers—Tesco, Sainsbury’s and Asda,” says Nick Austin, chairman and founder of Vivid Toy Group. “I think the reason for that is two-fold. First, moms are already in the stores every week buying groceries, and second, grocers are pushing really hard to increase their market share. They are committed to increasing their non-food and toy space and the squeeze on margins is so intense, it may have actually contributed to Woolies’ demise.”

Austin points to Tesco as an example of a retailer that has really capitalized on the absence of Woolworths. It’s catapulted itself to the position of number-two in the toy market behind Argos—a big change from just five years ago. “Tesco has a stated aim to become number one. And it’s making good on that by being aggressive in opening new stores, particularly non-food, and putting larger toy spaces in-store,” notes Austin.

When Woolworths shut its doors in 2008—taking with it 20% of licensed goods sales—many looked to Argos to fill the gap. The jury is still out on whether or not it’s happened, but recent innovations and category expansion have definitely put the catalog-based high street retailer in the running.

What's more, the recent recession has trained increasingly price-conscious consumers to look for offers and deals in what amounts to a self-destructive spiral for retailers. And that's where the grocers can compete on a level that many can't. "It's difficult to compete with grocers who are prepared to run and promote toys on single-figure margins if they have to," says Austin. "They're able to sell product at lower margins using food sales to subsidize non-food products."

Aggressive as they are, the picture isn't much rosier for grocers at the moment than it is for high street retailers. In late August, Walmart's UK outfit Asda claimed high fuel prices were keeping customers away and estimated that families have on average US\$9 less in disposable income each week than compared to last summer.

Meanwhile, Argos—a brand synonymous with choice and value—is fighting to maintain its position as the go-to retailer in times of economic difficulty. Its strategy appears to center on bolstering its online presence, investing in advertising to drive in-store pickup and expanding into new categories.

"The Argos website is really great, so I imagine it will become even more important to its business, with online taking over," says Jennifer Lawlor, SVP of strategy and planning for consumer products at Zodiak Rights. With 400 million visits last year and about half of its US\$6.4 billion in annual sales originating online, Argos is the most-visited high street website. In July, the catalog-based retailer launched a US\$6.3-million ad campaign—including digital, social, TV ads, VOD, radio and outdoor—encouraging web-savvy shoppers to order merchandise online and pick it up in-store the same day from one of its 750 outlets.

"Argos' saving grace is that it has a strong internet presence," says Austin. "People said that catalog would never survive, but it has, and it's a format that can be easily transferred to the internet. Argos has changed its business model to benefit from internet sales, and now one-third of all Argos toy sales originate online."

But if Argos wants to bolster that presence, some industry pundits believe it will need to make the user's journey simpler and easier to navigate. "Its latest catalog carries a small range of books, with a flash on the page to say there is more available online, so it's using the catalog as a teaser," says Susan Bolsover, category director for publishing and paper products at CPLG UK. "But I found it difficult to find the books online—they were a bit buried. It should be a one-click user experience, and simple. Argos has work to do."

Earlier this year, the retailer announced that it would expand its product carriage into children's apparel and increase its online book selection from 500 to 5,000 titles, having previously sold a small range of children's books through its in-store catalog. "It's a sea-change," says Eric Huang, head of licensing for Penguin Children's Books UK. "In the past, licensed books weren't as much of a focus. Argos is excited about Moshi Monsters and is

looking at Peppa Pig as well. But it's really about giving the retailer something exclusive—primarily bundles to hit gifting price points."

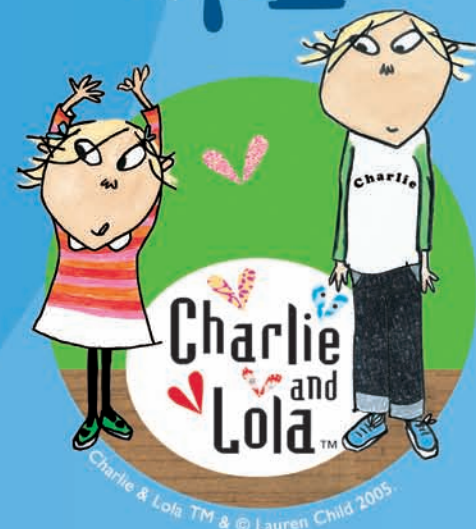
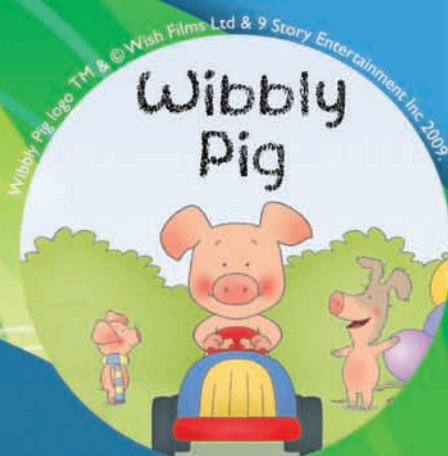
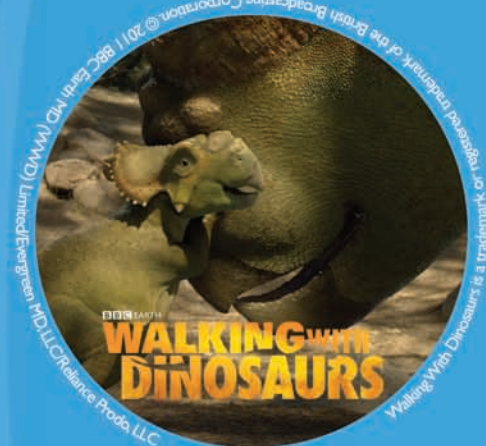
Bolsover agrees that the move into publishing is a welcome one. "Waterstone's is our last real book chain on the high street, so Argos has moved into a space where its big competitors are Amazon and the grocers, which have made a strident move into kids licensed publishing," she says. "The issue we have with the grocers is that they can't carry the depth and range that Waterstone's can. Argos has stores, a large catalog business and a strong online presence—which makes it a different proposition as a retailer." The key issue here is that the move into publishing came at the end of July, so at press time, the industry had yet to see any significant sales figures emerge. "The jury is still out," says Bolsover. "Can you really sell a book from a catalog page? Does it need to increase its online presence or start selling product physically in its stores?"



Argos has expanded its book inventory from 500 to 5,000 titles and now hosts licensed publishing boutiques online, including Disney, Peppa Pig and Thomas & Friends

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What's more, publishing as a category has been on a decline, due in part to a diminished presence on the high street. Meanwhile, online traffic is increasing—witness Amazon's widespread favor in Europe—and downloads to eReaders are on the rise, at least in the adult space. "No one is doing anything significant and revenue-generating in the digital space for kids—it's an add-on," says Bolsover. "There's an opportunity for Argos to look at this space and make itself a destination for kids downloads."

Even with licensors and manufacturers keen on having another channel for licensed apparel and books, many question Argos' ability to compete with established leaders in the space, like Amazon (books) and the grocers (affordable apparel). "Apparel is an interesting one for Argos, as the UK licensed apparel market is tough as ever with suppliers being subject to increases in raw material costs and tougher retailer margins," says Ian Downes, founder of indie agency Start Licensing. "The grocers or value stores can also react to price changes more quickly."

Consumer buying patterns in the category also present a hurdle. "Argos has a lot of stores and consumers that buy off the page due to its excellent delivery service. While there has been a lot of very successful off-the-page selling for apparel in other European territories like at Carrefour in France, Argos is not known for apparel," says Tim Juckes, category director for apparel at CPLG. "In licensed apparel, you have to be in-line with fashion. Argos has two main catalogs each year, while fashion has at least four seasons, so there's a challenge that has to be overcome right away. If Argos picks a license that doesn't work in apparel, it's left with huge overstock. But the orders have been massive, and licensees are breaking out the champagne already."

Lawlor concurs. "Apparel is particularly tricky because it's a 'try it before you buy it' category," she says. "But the biggest challenge is the way in which it sells. Argos can't provide an outlet for the impulse purchase that Woolies had."

And impulse buys are becoming increasingly significant in the kids product space in the UK at the moment. They're generally POS items and priced to sell at the cash, not via catalog. "Argos is not good at selling product under US\$5 at retail—things like collectibles and blind bag products," says Austin. "You're not going to queue up, fill out a form and go through the whole process for an impulse purchase that sells for US\$1.99. If that is the hot button—which it is over here at the moment—that doesn't work for Argos, but it does for the grocers and high-footfall retailers."

On the in-store front, Downes notes an increased commitment to marketing, despite a low footprint. "In-store, Argos has started to use more impactful POS materials to sell product and tap into impulse purchasing," he says. "It uses window displays as a call to action, but I think there is scope for it to leverage licenses to create more in-store events and stimulate consumer interest. For example, it could look at more exclusive products,




Toys, like these Waybuloo SKUs, got considerably more ink in Argos' fall/winter catalog

more linked purchases and perhaps create more themed character shopping days."

But Austin claims that Argos has innovated, particularly with the catalog, increasing the page allocation for toys (245 pages in the 2011 fall/winter edition). "It's also changed the way it merchandises on-page, with themed character pages that include a logo, web address and product range," he says. "It's also starting to use QR codes on catalog pages for people to access promotions."

It's too soon to tell if these strategies will pay off. Earlier this year, the retailer reported a 9.6% fall in like-for-like store sales to US\$1.3 billion during the 13 weeks between February 27 and May 28, noting a slump in demand for TVs and video games—with video game sales down 25%.

While Argos remains under pressure from a weaker consumer environment that's seeing food retailers steal market share, the retailer's commitment to licensing and its willingness to take risks make it an attractive partner for licensors and licensees alike. "It's a licensing-literate retailer and very keen to be at the forefront of licensing trends," says Austin. "It's not like a Walmart that waits a season to see what's working and then jumps. It will give you a shot, and so it is an incredibly valuable retailer for manufacturers launching new licenses in the UK." 

"Argos has started to use more impactful POS displays to sell product and tap into impulse buying."

—Ian Downes
Start Licensing

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Bowing at BLE

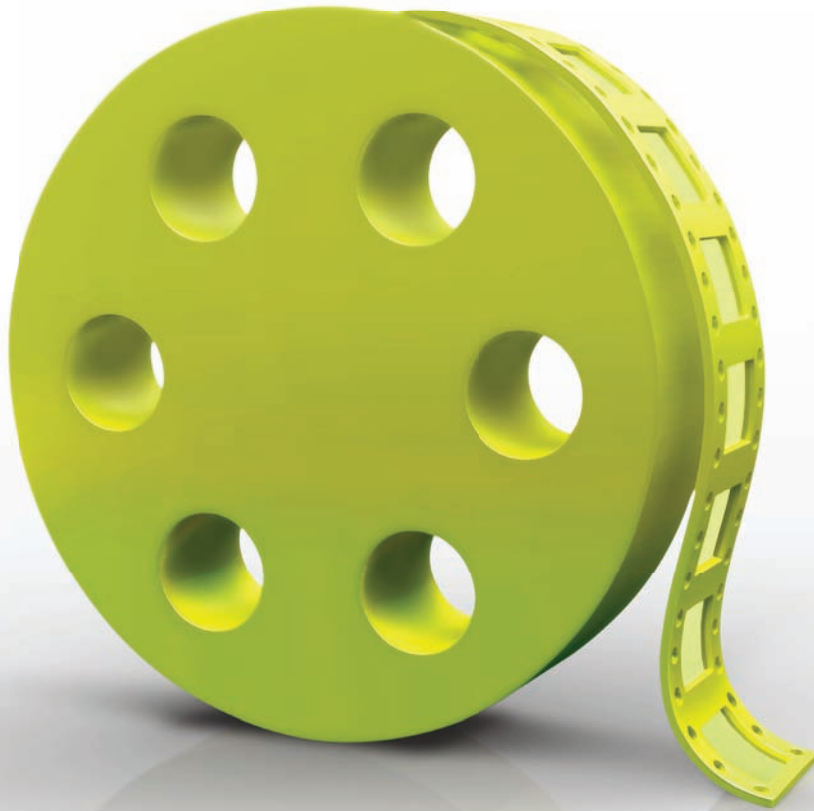
Euro-zone economies aren't exactly rock-solid right now, but that's not stopping the industry from putting its best foot (and properties) forward at Brand Licensing 2011

BY DAWN WILENSKY

Saban monkeys around with new initiatives

Saban Brands is powering up its international presence with a well-developed program in place for the worldwide launch of Power Rangers Samurai. Bandai is taking the lead on toys, while Namco/Bandai unleashes the first Wii and DS games this fall. Expansion is also underway for Paul Frank, with new licensees, as well as merchandise, landing at retail stores in Asia in 2011 and 2012. "Rather than go the obvious route with a kids show, we're actually bringing the property to a broad audience," explains SB president Elie Dekel. "The characters will also lend themselves to a kids series down the road, and we'll be at BLE looking for licensees in apparel, accessories, décor, social expressions and craft & activity." Brand icon Julius the Monkey will also star in an animated series for Christmas 2012, followed by additional specials for key holidays.

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*Source: Global Animation Industry: Strategies, Trends and Opportunities -2009, Animation Age Ghetto -www.tvtropes.com.

Aging up Pocoyo

Preschool favorite Pocoyo is getting something of a makeover with refreshed content that appeals to a slightly older audience, says Maria Doolan, MD of brand and business development at Madrid, Spain's Zinkia Entertainment. The third series *Let's Go Pocoyo* continues to embody the original's "learning through laughter" concept, but is being written for kids three to six and aims to impart lessons on numbers and vocabulary, among other subjects. Production on *Let's Go Pocoyo* just wrapped, and new episodes should start airing around the globe in 2012. And since staking a 51% claim in London-based distributor Cake Entertainment in April, Zinkia has been busy building Pocoyo's licensing program with master toy partner Bandai, while it looks to add publishing and apparel licensees, as well as broadcast partners in select territories.

Psyclops sets global targets

A handful of new agents have their eye(s) on Psyclops, a graphic property based on the one-eyed characters inspired by music, technology and art that debuted in Las Vegas last June. Under the stewardship of its worldwide rep, L.A.-based The Jim Henson Company, new agents signed include Alphanim (France), Wild Pumpkin (Australia), Segal Licensing (Canada), Carmen Ariza for Europe (excluding the UK and France, Israel and Russia) and Blufolio (Japan). Tween- and teen-targeted plush, collectibles and room décor are set to launch in spring 2012 at specialty retailers, department stores, college book stores and gift stores in the US.

Calimero turns new leaf at 50

Paris-based Alphanim has hatched a new CGI-animated series based on classic Italian property Calimero that tells the tale of the only black chicken living amongst a family of yellow ones. The 104 x 11-minute series targeting kids four to eight is set to debut on TF1 in France, and Alphanim is on the hunt for international licensees, including master toy, apparel, publishing and interactive. In the primary European markets, including France, Italy, Germany and Iberia, new products are expected to roll out shortly after the TV launch in 2013 for the brand's 50th anniversary, explains Cedric Petitpas, Alphanim's VP of marketing, licensing and business development.



Bumping up awareness

Now that kids hanging out at UK playgrounds have gotten their hands on Bumpeez, its Netherlands-based licensor Glow Europe is busy working on a licensing program to drive awareness. So what's a Bumpeez? The new collectible toy consists of two parts—a circular chip featuring one of a 100 character designs, encased in a removable silicon ring that comes in a variety of shapes, colors and sizes. When the chip is placed in the ring, Bumpeez can be bounced and used to play games. Each chip has an individual value so it can be traded. "The natural next step for kids who are becoming enthusiastic about collecting Bumpeez is to form a deeper connection with the brand through owning and interacting with branded merchandise and licensed products," says MD Jeroen Menting. Apps, apparel, accessories and publishing will drive the first phase of the program for spring/summer 2012, followed by video games and toys in fall/winter 2012 to coincide with the peak sales of Bumpeez Series 2.

Little Prince goes Italian

Literary fave *The Little Prince* is getting the royal treatment from new Italian agent Atlantica Entertainment. The Milan-based company plans to build a program based around the new 52 x 26-episode series from Method Animation, France Télévisions and DQE. "*The Little Prince's* legacy in the marketplace is certain to fuel even greater success among children and parents, who will continue to embrace the essence of the book's storyline, 'One sees clearly only with the heart,'" says Rachele Geraci, licensing manager at Atlantica Entertainment. Stationery, apparel and toys with unisex appeal are due on shelves at Italian specialty stores this December.

Invizimals readied for licensing push

The third incarnation of the popular PSP monster-hunting game *Invizimals: The Lost Tribes* heads to shelves in November supported by an aggressive consumer products strategy crafted by the European agent for Sony PlayStation properties, Target Entertainment. The London-based company is doing some hunting of its own, seeking master licensees for toys, apparel, bedding and publishing for the property aimed at boys seven and up. Some highlights of the game include a new storyline, 65 fresh characters, a new Tag Team battle mode, as well as the ability to train and customize the Invizimals team.

Mouk to get around more

A new chapter is set to unfold for literary property Mouk with Paris-based Millimages creating the first-ever animated series based on the titular character from Marc Boutavant's book *Around the World with Mouk: A Trail of Adventure*. The 52 x 11-minute animated series, targeting kids four to seven, is currently set to air on France 5 in late 2011, before the show rolls out internationally in 2012. A licensing program is in development with an iPad and iPhone app due in late 2011, and Millimages is looking for licensing partners in all categories.



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EPISODES**



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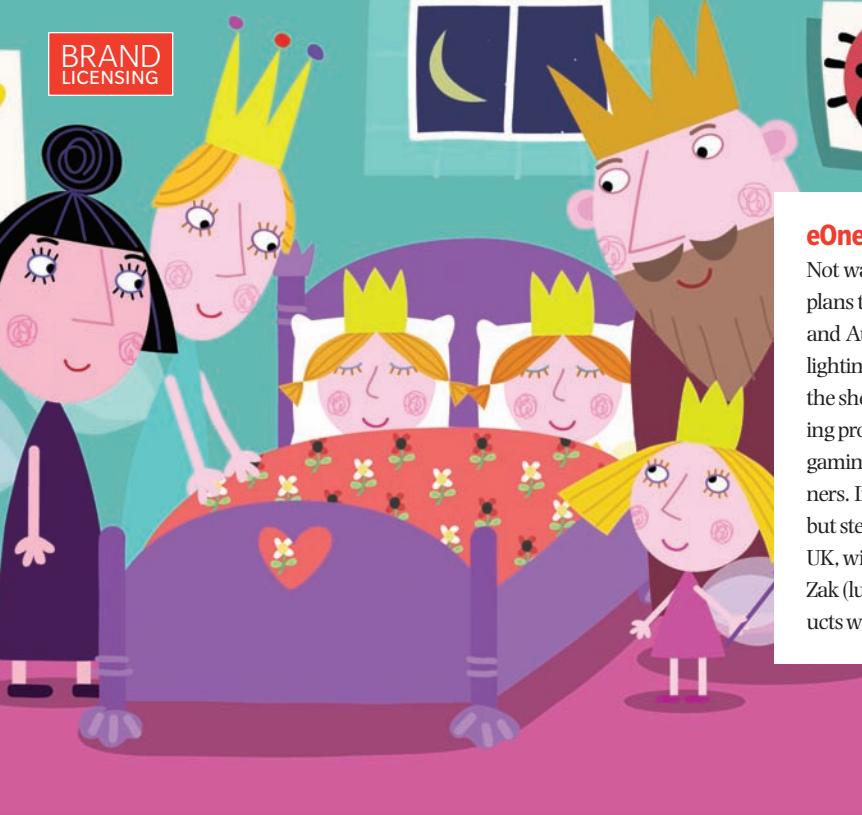
PLUSH TOYS



GAME



BEDDING



eOne extends reach of Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom

Not wanting to keep its most popular property penned up, eOne Entertainment plans to expand Peppa Pig products into key territories including the US, Europe and Australia. And the big news for *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom* is the greenlighting of an additional 52, 11-minute eps due in 2012/2013. eOne will use the show to sign partners for the third phase of Ben and Holly's UK-based licensing program, and is on the lookout for part works publishing, toiletries, furniture, gaming, posters, stickers and fast-moving consumer goods/promotions partners. International licensing partners are also being sought. Meanwhile, a slow but steady build (à la Peppa Pig) is planned for eOne's newest brand Humf in the UK, with new partners including Aurora (plush), Igloo Books, P2 Games (apps), Zak (lunchware) and Cooneen and Misirli (both nightwear) on-board. First products will roll out in late 2011, followed by a full retail launch in summer 2012.

Celebrating Postman Pat's 30th

Fans of Postman Pat definitely have something to write home about as licensor Classic Media plans a broad range of initiatives to commemorate the property's 30th anniversary. Long-time broadcast partner BBC Children's just greenlit a new *Special Delivery Service* series to air in 2013, and UK moviegoers will also be able to view screenings of three specials from the new limited-edition *Happy Birthday Pat* DVD in September at 68 Vue Cinemas. The popular postie will also have his very own model village installed at Longleat Safari & Adventure Park in Wiltshire, England. On the digital end, Postman Pat comes to market this fall with an iPhone/iPad app that contains 10 new games for kids.


Spreading the Jamm

A carefully constructed licensing program is being developed for new preschool show *Jelly Jamm* from Spain-based producers Vodka Capital and 737 Shaker, co-produced with RTVE, Bandai and Big Picture. The show, targeting kids four to six, will premiere this fall in more than 150 countries on broadcasters such as Cartoonito, Discovery Kids Latin America, RTVE, RTP, Boing, Five and Televisa. "Our initial focus is on rolling out content-driven products like DVD/home entertainment, books, music, web and mobile, and then launch toys [with Bandai] and finally secondary soft-lines categories," says Steven Posner, managing partner at Vodka Capital. The company, which has a game and mobile division, plans to create *Jelly Jamm's* internet, mobile and video game products, but is retaining international licensing agents to rep the property in other categories. So far, El Ocho will handle Spain and Portugal. Turner CN Enterprises is on-board for EMEA and Televisa Consumer Products is taking care of Mexico.



Turner CNE is getting into girls licensing, repping Spin Master's Zoobles across EMEA

Turner CN Enterprises goes broad

Boasting its most significant profile at the show ever, London-based Turner CN Enterprises is reaching beyond its boy-centric roots to represent new preschool and girls properties. Turner's preschool broadcast platform Cartoonito went live across EMEA in September, cementing key partnerships with Endemol (*Bananas in Pyjamas*) and Vodka Capital (*Jelly Jamm*) for broadcast and licensing rights. Several other similar deals are in the pipeline, says Alan Fenwick, VP of Turner CN Enterprises. And the move into the girls four to nine market provides the company with an opportunity to represent third-party brands, such as Spin Master's Zoobles and Giochi Preziosi's *Puppy in my Pocket*. Turner will also be presenting properties for kids ages six to 12, as well as entering the teen and adult licensing worlds through its portfolio of retro brands and globally recognizable channel identities such as CNN and Adult Swim. 

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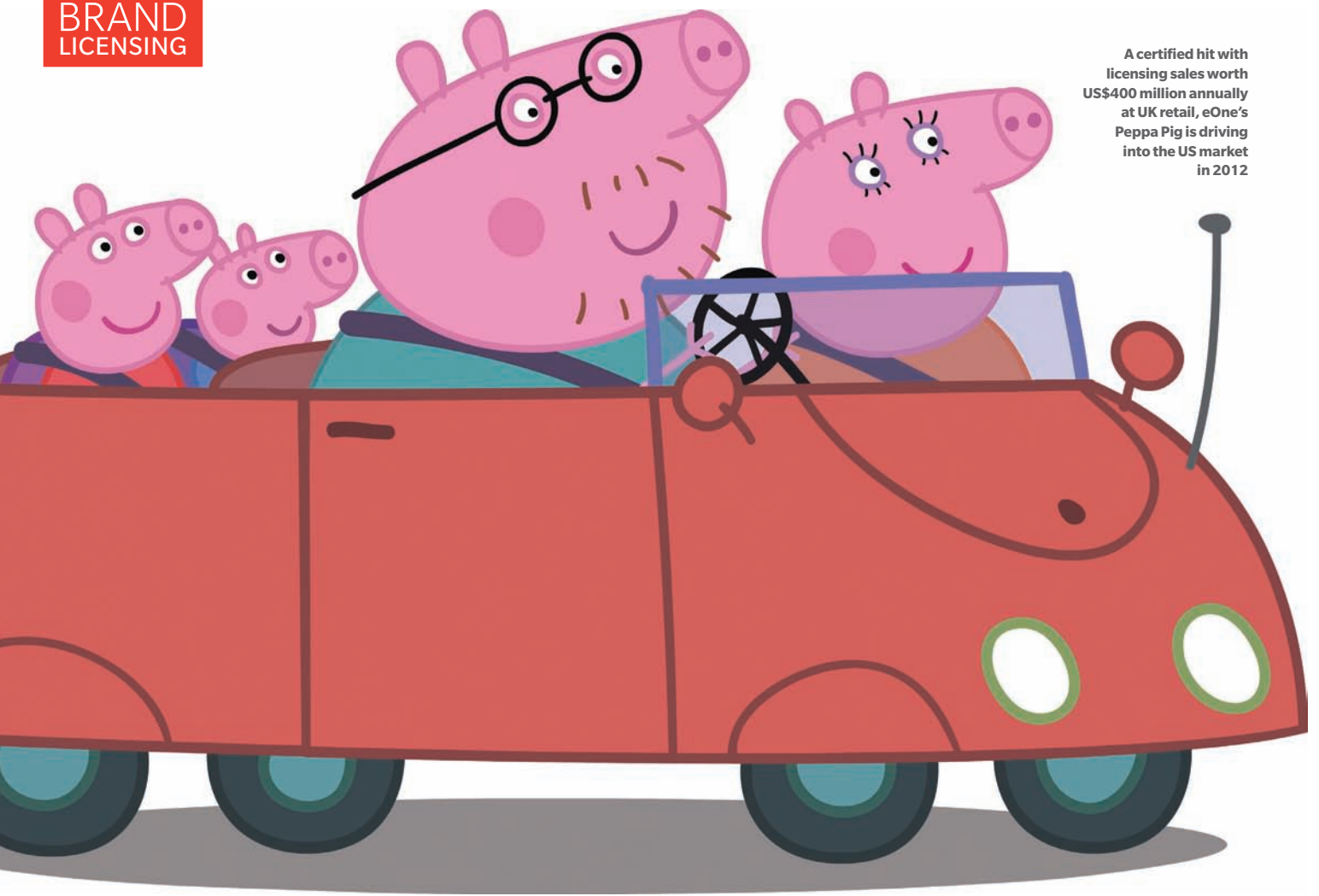
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A certified hit with licensing sales worth US\$400 million annually at UK retail, eOne's Peppa Pig is driving into the US market in 2012



British invasion

Heading into Brand Licensing this year, a spate of UK-born properties are demanding the attention of licensing agents, retailers and consumers the world over—even in that bastion of global pop culture known as the US

BY GARY RUSAK

This summer, the last instalment of the UK-originated Harry Potter franchise hit theaters and proceeded to rake in approximately US\$1.3 billion (and counting) at the worldwide box office. While its CP revenue wasn't equivalent to the theater haul, the undeniable success of the IP has arguably re-opened US eyes to the potential of properties from the UK.

"When something is such a big success, I think everyone just forgets and assumes it's American," jokes Rob Corney, MD of London-based agency Bulldog Licensing. "We are used to American cultural imperialism, but I think there is an increasing perception that it's coming back the other way."

The divergence, says Corney, began in the early part of the 20th century when the UK invested in parochial TV programming and niche productions at the same time that the US, driven by entrepreneurs in Hollywood, invested in productions with mass-market appeal that established the country as a culturally dominant force for the next century.

Janet Woodward, co-director of agency JELC, who has previous experience bringing UK property Poppy Cat to the US, says the evolution of the global economy has helped bridge the gap for UK properties looking to carve out a slice of the American licensing pie.

"Both cultures are watching each other's TV now," Woodward says. "[US retailers] are just more open than they used to be to UK products. All the big retailers in both countries know each other now, so if you have a success in the UK, it is likely that it's on a US retailer's radar."



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Moshi Monsters is currently rocking an exclusive at US toy retail giant Toys 'R' Us, a good year ahead of schedule

Monster success A key driver in breaking down the barrier to non-US properties is the flattening out of content distribution, owing to the proliferation of internet use. The web has accelerated IP exploitation by side-stepping traditional broadcast platforms, making it possible for kids in the US to consume content and become enamored of properties from around the world. And this arguably borderless platform has already bred successful intercontinental IP, currently in the form of Mind Candy's Moshi Monsters.

The social gaming site aimed primarily at seven- to 12-year-olds, launched in 2008 and has recently entered the consumer products world with a bang. Led by toys, trading cards and publishing, Moshi products had a soft launch in the UK last October. By January 2011, industry tracker NPD Group's numbers indicated that Moshi Monsters products were second only to Lego in toy sales across the UK.

With 16 million registered US users on the site (compared to nine million in the UK), Mind Candy didn't have to wait for the traditional gestation period to pass in order to launch consumer products Stateside.

"Our challenge in launching was explaining to retailers that you don't have to spend much time on TV ads at all," says Darran Garnham, head of global licensing at Mind Candy.

And this past summer, Moshi launched an exclusive line of plush (Spin Master is the brand's US toy partner) exclusively at Toys 'R' Us locations in the US. While concrete sell-through numbers are not being released at this time, Garnham confirms that sales are "tracking significantly better than forecasted."

The retail exclusive expires at the end of the year, and Moshi products, including books from Scholastic, toys from Spin Master and various other items from more than 20 US licensees, will hit US mass-market retailers like Target and Walmart in 2012.

"It's a fascinating thing," says Garnham. "Usually you are waiting two years from when you launch it in the UK to move to the US. But here, it was just a matter of months."

Lining up UK-based Coolabi's publishing-turned-TV-property Poppy Cat is also on the fast track in the US. First introduced at MIPCOM 2010, the 2D-animated series bowed on Nick Jr. UK in May. By then, it had already been picked up by PBS Kids Sprout and is slated to launch on the US net in November.

"I have never known a UK show to sell to US broadcasters before it started airing in the UK," says Michael Dee, director of content at Coolabi. "It was extraordinary."

Coolabi has recently signed a slew of UK licensing partners, including a master toy deal with Golden Bear, children's publisher Alligator Books (art and activity books), Trade Mark Collections (children's umbrellas and bags), and VMC Accessories (fashion accessories and dress up).

A major UK launch is slated for fall 2012 and the US launch will follow with a similar strategy. Coolabi now has The Joester Loria Group as its US agent and is looking to introduce publishing products into the market in spring 2012, followed by niche and specialty offerings deeper into the year.

Dee says that the property owes a debt of gratitude to its forerunners Bob the Builder, Teletubbies and Thomas the Tank Engine for establishing the UK's preschool reputation in the US.

"I think the US has taken more of an interest in UK content over the last five years," says Dee. "I think people connect the properties with the network they first air on in their territory, not necessarily from where they originated."

A more traditional gestation period can be seen with the success of eOne Family's preschool property Peppa Pig. The property doubled its UK sales last year, and ranked as the number-one preschool property in the UK toy market, according to the NPD Group.

Peppa grossed more than US\$400 million in UK retail sales in 2010, while the TV series launched there in 2004. The IP is only now poised for US broadcast and consumer product success. (In 2005, Peppa's US trip got sidetracked by landing a slot on Cartoon Network's ill-fated morning preschool block Tickle-U. The block was so short-lived, in fact,

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Language: English

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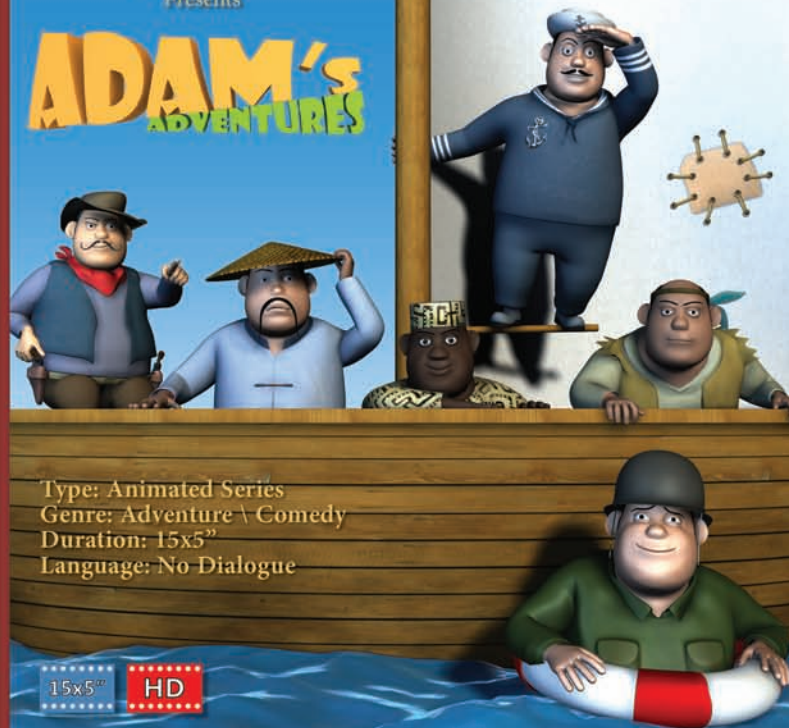
DATES



Type: Animated Series
Genre: Musical \ Educational
Duration: 15 x 7"
Language: English

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ADAM'S ADVENTURES



Type: Animated Series
Genre: Adventure \ Comedy
Duration: 15x5"
Language: No Dialogue

15x5" HD



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that Peppa really didn't get a chance to gain a foothold in the US market.)

But this time, *Peppa Pig* scored a prime berth on Nick Jr. US in a weekend slot and began airing in February. By mid-June it went on to strip on the preschool channel. It was this visibility that led to a US master toy deal with Fisher-Price, and the wheels are now in motion for a major US retail launch in Q3 2012.

Jennifer Bennett, VP of North American licensing and merchandising at eOne, says the difference in the retail landscapes will dictate rollout strategy in both markets. "In the UK, we launched with Mothercare and specialty shops," she says. "But you can't really make a business of that in the US." That market, she contends, demands a mass-ready program in the traditional categories of toys, publishing, apparel and DVD. "We are handling it like it's a new property in the US," she says. "You can't rest on the success we have had in another market."

The UK success of the collectible Gogo's Crazy Bones is also translating well in the US market. Gogo's, an IP represented by Bulldog Licensing, re-launched in the UK in March 2008 after experiencing success the previous decade. It initially landed in the CTN (confectionary, tobacco and news agency) channel in the UK. And although there is no equivalent to CTN stores in the US, Bulldog, with the assistance of its US partner Jonic Distribution North America, was able to bring the product to the country's mass-market merchants in March 2010.

"It can be a scary proposition to launch a specialty brand in the US," says Corney. However, a campaign of promotional partnerships and marketing has landed the products in mass retail throughout the US, including end-caps at Walmart and plum positions at drugstore chain Walgreens.

Corney thinks that while the initial success in the UK might have helped, it most likely wasn't solely responsible for its success. "If I go into a major UK retailer and say, 'This is big in the US,' they will say, 'Yes!' But that won't likely work the same way in the US," he admits. Corney says that owing to the IP's success in the collectible and toy markets in the US, he is currently working to put together a licensing program that goes beyond those categories.

Don't go changin' Perhaps what links all of the properties that have had success crossing the ocean is the insistence of their brand owners in keeping the concepts (for the most part) in their original forms.

"We have had to do very little," says Garnham of Moshi Monsters' transatlantic travels. "We look at Facebook, and it uses the same model all over the globe."

While Garnham says some minor tweaks may be needed when Moshi enters Asian and African markets, the only significant change made so far is in how the name is pronounced. "In the UK it's MAW-shi, in the US it's MOO-shi," he says. "That's about it."

Sticking to your original guns is also the strategy being employed by eOne for Peppa. Besides some minor vocal redubs to localize vocabulary—changing the word pounds to

dollars, for example—the company was hesitant to alter anything. "We felt making adjustments could be detrimental," says Bennett. "We thought there was a real possibility that changing something could lead to a lost-in-translation effect."

The dialog for Coolabi's Poppy Cat, however, will dubbed into an American dialect for all but one of its characters. But Dee says that the core of the series remains unaltered. "You don't want to change the essence of it," he says. "The US is picking up a show that it already loves, so we didn't want to change anything beyond the superficial accents."

On the consumer products side, meanwhile, the strategy is being dictated by the differences in the retail landscape in the two countries. The UK has a more robust specialty tier—one that really doesn't exist in the US. So product offshoots made for the speciality tier in the UK might first launch at mass retailers in the US, like Gogo's Crazy Bones. In the case of Gogo's, this also had an effect on how the product was packaged. In the UK, the Bones were sold in foil packets. But in the US, retailers demanded their packaging resemble that of toys more closely and used see-through plastic bubble packs.

"There is a different way of selling it in the US," says Corney. "But the product itself, what it looks and feels like, is exactly the same." ③



A US mass-market hopeful for 2013, Coolabi's Poppy Cat is set to make its debut on PBS Kids Sprout in November

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Rights to a producer are what inventory is to a shopkeeper. We had lots of folks taking photographs with the Maggot. When you think about it, the idea of **your butt** or some funny body part **being able to talk**—that is **every kid's dream**. Hello McFly! We're there. We're in the future. It's like, 'How many ways can you skin a cat?' **Why anyone would want to skin a cat, exactly, I don't know.**

- CMPA president **Norm Bolen** on redressing the balance of ownership via Canada's new Terms of Trade deal
- **Mike Polis** on the reaction Wildbrain's new IP, Hello Maggot, received at Comic-Con
- Nelvana's **Irene Weibel** notes the particular appeal of new comedy, *The Day my Butt Went Psycho*
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